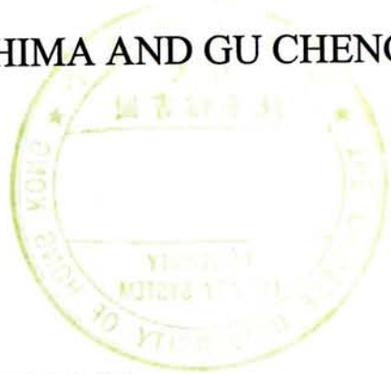
REFLECTIONS OF NARCISSISM IN THREE NOVELS BY OSCAR WILDE, YUKIO MISHIMA AND GU CHENG



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A THESIS

Submitted to
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Division of English

1998

ABSTRACT

Narcissism has been an interesting research area not only for literary critics and historians, but also for modern psychologists, sociologists and political scientists. It became particularly prominent in the modern era, partly due to the decline of religion and the rise of the individual, and partly due to the anguish and insecurity of modern life. However, narcissism as a motif in literature has seldom been explored by western critics, and is nearly left untouched in the oriental context. This thesis thus focuses on three novels by English, Japanese and Chinese writers: Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Yukio Mishima's *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956), and Gu Cheng's *Ying'er* (1993), and, by making use of the major theories of narcisssim, aims at a cross-cultural study of the narcissistic motif in literature.

The social, historical and cultural background is known to affect a writer's life and sensibility, which are accordingly reflected in his/ her works. It is therefore not surprising that the "Yellow Nineties" of England, the post-war Japan, and the post-Mao China contributed respectively to the narcissistic sentiments of Wilde, Mishima and Gu Cheng, and are in turn manifested in the memorable characters portrayed and the stylistic devices adopted in their novels. Moreover, each novel ultimately discloses a structure that prompts the reader to adopt a position that is at once detached and empathic, making him/ her realize himself/ herself in reading the novel, thus convincing him/ her that narcissism is an essentially universal experience. While the universality of narcissism could be seen as a result of the more fundamental changes in culture and in the "self" in the past decades, especially in the case of the Japanese and the Chinese, intrinsic cultural differences might still have affected the expressions of narcissism, as shown in the novels studied in this thesis.

論文摘要

自戀現象不論對於文學研究、歷史學，還是對於現代心理學、社會學和政治科學,都是一個很富趣味性的研究範圍。到了現代，由於宗教的衰落，個人主義的澎湃，也由於現代人生活的無助和缺乏安全感，自戀現象尤爲重要。然而，西方對於文學中自戀思想的研究不多，在東方更幾乎沒有。因此，這篇論文的目的，是要深入探討三本英國，日本和中國的小說：奧斯卡・黃爾德 (Oscar Wilde) 的《杜林・格雷的畫像》(*The Picture of Dorian Gray*)，三島由紀夫的《金閣寺》，和顧城的《英兒》,並透過自戀思想的主要理論，對自戀這個文學主題作出跨文化的研究。

一般來說，每個作家的生命和思想均受到他/她身處時代的社會、歷史和文化背境所影響，而這種種因而反映在他/她的作品裡。所以，十九世紀末的英國，第二次世界大戰後的日本，和文化大革命後的中國，均直接或間接地造成了王爾德、三島和顧城的自戀意識，而這些意識思想亦接而反映到他們所描繪的角色和所運用的技巧裡。值得注意的是，雖然每本小說的結構不同，但它們均引領讀者對小說人物採取一種既抽離、客觀，同時又感同身受的態度，從而令讀者在小說中察覺到自己的存在，並信服自戀是一種普遍和跨文化、社會的經驗。自戀之所以普遍，大概可以追溯到各國文化和「自我」觀念的轉變，尤其在日本和中國;然而，各國文化、社會基本而獨有的特色，欲仍在影響自戀思想的體現和形態。

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks go to Professor Kwok-kan Tam, my thesis supervisor, who offered me generous advice in formulating my thesis proposal, guided me through the arduous but rewarding job of writing my thesis, and helped me patiently with all the editing work afterwards.

Many thanks go to Professor Andrew Parkin, our Division Head, Professor Mimi Yuet-may Ching, and Professor Benzi Zhang, the co-ordinators of the Literature section for the academic years 1996-7 and 1997-8 respectively, who helped me with all the administrative procedures. In particular, I considered myself lucky to have the chance working under Professor Parkin, Professor Ching, together with Professor Louise Ho as their teaching assistant. They did not only help to lighten my workload, but also express much concern for me, without which both my teaching and learning experience would have been tedious.

I also wish to thank the Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund Council for awarding me a fellowship in 1997 and renewing it in 1998. The awards were indeed tremendous pleasure and surprises for me as a student; they also mean long-lasting honour, stimulation and encouragement for my future career.

Lastly, I am forever indebted to my family, who has been offering me support to pursue my studies, and standing by me in all those tough times, especially during the past year.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

NARCISSISM, APPROACH AND THEORIES

The story of Narcissus first appeared in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8 A.D.) It surfaces in the literature of the Middle Ages, for instance, *The Romance of the Rose* (1225-30) written by Guillaume de Lorris (Favre 868); reappears in the eighteenth century, as in Rousseau's comedy *Narcisse ou l'amant de lui-même* (1729-42) (Ibid 869); and becomes extremely significant in the symbolist movement by the end of the nineteenth century, as it appears in Gide's *Le Traite du Narcissé* (1891, 1892), and Valé ry's *Charmes* (1926) and *L'Auge* (1945) (Ibid 869-70). The interrelated motifs embodied by the story, such as the problem of identity, the interplay between self and other, thwarted desire, beauty, death and obliteration, have not only provided rich resources for countless novels, poems, and plays, but have also served as interesting research areas for literary historians. For instance, Douglas Bush's *Anthology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry* (1912) documents the major English versions of the narcissus legend through 1680 (Berman 1), and Louise Vinge's *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature Up to the Early Nineteenth Century* (1967) explores in detail the hundreds of literary transformations of the myth (Ibid 1-2).

The Myth of Narcissus: Its Multidisciplinary Significance

The ancient myth of Narcissus is far too intriguing and its meanings far too rich and complex to be limited to the field of literary research. With the advent of modern psychology, therefore, its implications were explored by psychologists by the end of the nineteenth century. Havelock Ellis was the first to invoke the mythical figure of Narcissus to describe an extreme form of autoerotism in which sexual emotions are absorbed and lost in self-admiration (Pulver 321). Subsequently, Sadger made narcissism a psychoanalytic concept (Ibid 321), and Rank further associated it with "vanity" and "self-admiration" and explored its defensive nature (Ibid 322). In his ground-breaking essay, "On Narcissism: An Introduction" (1914), Freud postulates narcissism as a normal transitional state between autoerotism and object love, links it to the libido theory, and differentiates between its primary and secondary forms. Post-Freudian psychologists help enriching our understanding of the disorder: Kohut in *The Analysis of the Self* (1971) emphasizes the importance of empathy both as an observational tool and as a psychological antidote for poisoned self-esteem, whereas Kernberg in *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* (c1992) offers detailed descriptions of intense rage lying under the patient's apparent calmness. Though the legitimization of Narcissistic Personality Disorder by the American Psychiatric Association in the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in 1980 (DSM-III) was criticized by many to be judgmental, the diagnostic criteria nevertheless succeed in capturing many paradoxical features of narcissism.

The motif of narcissism has also attracted the attention of sociologists and political scientists. Reuben Fine, in the "Historical Introduction" to his book *Narcissism, the Self, and Society* (1986), describes the three forms in which narcissism

has occurred throughout history. The "narcissism of the ruler" reigned supreme in absolute monarchies and were left unquestioned until their authority got exploded by the various revolutionary currents by the end of the eighteenth century (16). The "narcissism of the common man" from the nineteenth century onwards was a result of the overthrow of absolutism by philosophers and of changes in the political situation (23). It has been manifested in the rise of nationalism which is seen by Fine as the projection of the narcissism of the ordinary person onto the nation (21), and in the extreme flourishing of autobiography since the Second World War (20). Finally, there is the "narcissism of the psychotic": though psychosis has existed at all times in all cultures, not until the twentieth century was it fully realized as a narcissistic disturbance (35-6).

Narcissism: Its Relevance to the Modern Age

Although narcissism embodies ideas that are as old as Greek myths and as modern as the latest clinical research, there is no doubt that the concept is particularly relevant to the twentieth century. Jeffrey Satinover, in his essay "Science and the Fragile Self," discusses the rise of narcissism in western societies against the backdrop of social and historical developments for the past two thousand years. He postulates a limited human being who is yet possessed by a strong desire to strive beyond his limitations, and therefore faces the dilemma of how to fulfil his unique capacity for self-expression without falling prey to "narcissistic inflation and depression" (101). Before the end of the first millennium the worldview was theocentric, and the traditional solution to this dilemma was religion, which is, according to Satinover, the "projective identification" of the self with a "shared image" of God (103). Around the year 1000 A.D., however, religion gave way to a fascination with alchemy and magic.

The medieval projection of the self onto a God-image began to break down, and the "locus of creativity" shifted from God the Creator to the "creative man" (106). The Enlightenment and Romanticism further diffracted an originally theocentric attitude toward a "thorough deification" of the "self" (108). In the modern era, the mobilization of science and the spread of literacy via the reproduction of the written word brought the "revolution of selfhood" and the "cult of the individual" to an even wider public (108). Narcissistic inflation and depression, no longer bound effectively by religion, become psychological obstructions to the capacity for love, work, and self-acceptance.

Satinover thus assumes a narcissistic tendency in each individual which explodes when it is left unchecked. His argument is contrasted by that of Stephen Frosh (1991), who sees narcissism as a way of counteracting the experience of alienation and loss. Quoting from Marshall Berman (1984), Frosh describes how the disrupting processes of modernization, like industrialization, urban growth, mass communications, produce the conflicting experience of modernity, that is, a "maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish" (Berman 15, see also Frosh 15). While individuals could seize this period of temporality for reconstruction and revolution, they might easily submit to the ravages of modernity (19); thus, while some of them enact what Richards (1989) terms the Freudian concept of "Endurance," which is the recognition and acceptance of the modern agony without recourse to escapist illusions, others seek protection in a world of illusions, defending themselves against the devastating realities of urban experience (20). A prominent example of the former is the creation of art; of the latter, the resort to narcissism. Creativity, like mental health, is concerned with the encounter with reality, its transformation, expression, and regeneration (84). From Frosh's point of view, therefore, narcissism is more "regressive" than "creative." It merely restores an "illusion of oneness," made possible by a "denial of difference" in favour of an

"imagined land" in which separation, loss, unmet desire, and even work, are absent; and by holding out a "seductive promise of return" to the early infantile stage when ego and non-ego were merged (84-5).

Frosh's perspective is not totally dissimilar to that of Christopher Lasch. In *The Culture of Narcissism* (1978), Lasch labels narcissism as the "best" way of coping with the tensions and anxieties of modern life, and highlights a number of social and cultural factors in the late twentieth century which tend to bring out narcissistic traits present in everyone, thus making the narcissistic type of personality as prominent as ever. First, modern bureaucracies such as business corporations and political organizations, with their dense interpersonal environment, both elicit the manipulation of interpersonal relations and discourage the formation of deep personal attachments (91). Besides, the mediation of modern life by electronic images not only calls into question the reality of the external world, but also makes the sense of selfhood dependent on the consumption of images of oneself, for instance, by using the camera for "self-surveillance" (97-8). Similarly, medicine and psychiatry brings about a "therapeutic ideology" that creates insecurity and encourages the pattern of "anxious self-scrutiny," in which the individual endlessly examines himself for signs of aging and ill health, or for reassuring indications that his life is proceeding according to schedule (98-9). In both cases, the intense concentration on appearance and on the self as a set of images and roles leads to an alienated experience of unreality and inner emptiness. Coupled with these specific changes are the more general ones with regard to family life and patterns of socialization. The insecurity of social life results in the narcissistic inability to identify with posterity (102). In addition, the family often serves as the "intermediary" through which social patterns reproduce themselves in personality (102). Modern parents, haunted by the sense of historical discontinuity, attempt to make children feel loved and to give priority to self-fulfilment at the same time. This combination of

emotional detachment with interpersonal manipulation is a "prescription" for the narcissistic personality structure (102).

The Necessity for a Cross-cultural Study of Narcissism

As discussed, the term "Narcissism" has attracted a wide array of literary, psychological and sociological discussions, and has become a highly observable phenomenon in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, only a few critics, Jeffrey Berman being one of them, have explored the motif of narcissism in literature in a systematic and detailed manner. In *Narcissism and the Novel* (1990), Berman selects a number of nineteenth and early twentieth-century British novels which all powerfully dramatize the dynamics of the endangered self, and discusses the motif on four separate yet interrelated levels: fictional character, text, author and reader. Another useful study on narcissism in literature is *Narcissism and the Text* (1986), co-edited by Layton and Schapiro, which is a collection of essays on literary works from the Elizabethan period to the twentieth century. As in Berman's work, it mainly focuses on English Literature, and offers various ways of how theories of narcissism could be applied to literary criticism, such as through the focus on autobiography, the study of characterization and structure, the use of personal history, the reader's psychological response and the socio-historical approach.

Studies on narcissism in literature are even rarer in the Chinese context. The negligence, if not exclusion, of narcissism in the Chinese culture by both psychologists and literary critics is due to two reasons. First, whereas the term "individualism" is usually attached to the western world and its thinking, oriental cultures have very often been regarded as "collectivist," a label which downplays any possibility of the individual. Second, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century, when China had

more contacts with the west, that modern psychology was first introduced into China (Jing 671). Still, its development was thwarted first by the Sino-Japanese war, and subsequently by the Cultural Revolution when it was criticized as a so-called "bourgeois pseudoscience" and completely uprooted as a scientific discipline (Ibid 672). Though the policy of reform in 1979 was accompanied by a recognition of the social value of psychology and has opened it up to new fields of research (Ibid 672-4), its history is relatively short. Moreover, resources have largely been spent on those fields that make direct contributions to social improvement, such as cognitive and developmental psychology (Ibid 672-3), rather than on the development of indigenous theories in pathological behaviour.

Chen Bingliang (Chan Ping-leung) is among the very few who have worked on the issue of narcissism in modern Chinese fiction. In his essay "Zhongguo xiandai xiaoshuo zhongde shuixianzi renwu" [Narcissistic characters in modern Chinese fiction 中國現代小說中的水仙子人物 1987], he draws upon theories by Kohut, D. Macaskill, Layton and Stuart and delineates the "a-social" and "anti-social" qualities typical of narcissistic characters. Then he looks at how the characters portrayed by Ding Ling [丁玲], Eileen Chang [張愛玲], Yu Dafu [郁達夫], and Bai Xianyong [白先勇] display these qualities, and discusses the narcissistic motif in terms of its socio-historical significance. His later essay, entitled "Shuixianzi renwu zaitan" [Revisiting Narcissistic Characters 水仙子人物再探1990], gives a more insightful study of the ancient myth by placing equal emphases on Narcissus and Echo; it also introduces additional theoretical concepts which are applicable to character studies.

As not many critics have worked on the theme of narcissism in western literature, and even fewer in Chinese literature, if any cross-cultural studies on this issue do exist, they probably have not been documented. However, a cross-cultural study on narcissism must be useful to various disciplines including psychology,

literature and sociology. First, narcissism, like other psychological and literary phenomena, displays social and cultural specificities. However, critics in their study of literary texts of Chinese and other oriental cultures, tend to take the short cut of "fitting" and "adapting" works into established theories, and thus overlook the possible socio-cultural variations. A comparative approach would at least attempt in answering questions, such as how narcissism takes on various forms in different cultures, and how the motif is treated differently by writers of different cultural origins. Moreover, as literature is the product of various social, historical and cultural factors, the exploration of the narcissistic motif would, in return, contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the social, historical and cultural background in which they were written.

The current thesis thus aims at a cross-cultural study on narcissism in the novels by English, Japanese and Chinese writers. The works chosen are Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Yukio Mishima's *The Temple of The Golden Pavilion* (1956) and Gu Cheng's [顧城] *Ying'er* [英兒 1993]. The theme of narcissism is perhaps most frequently explored in Oscar Wilde's novel, and less so in Mishima's work. Since Gu Cheng's *Ying'er* was published only recently, few systematic and detailed studies have yet been conducted on it.

A Psycho-cultural Approach

According to Jeffrey Berman, it is possible to explore narcissistic issues in a literary text on four separate, yet interrelated levels: fictional character, text, author and reader (49). On the level of character, he detects that any psychological commentary on characters such as Victor Frankenstein, Heathcliff, Clarissa Dalloway could not be made without the resort to fundamental narcissistic issues, and that the problems experienced by these characters in their adult lives could almost be traced to early

parent-child conflicts (49-50). On the level of text, narcissistic issues show up in various ways, such as the use of "Doppëlganger" to illustrate the essential oneness of two characters, or a narrative pattern of "consistent empathic failure" or "solipsistic thinking" with the effect of manipulating the reader into withdrawing sympathy from deserving characters (51). Anther typical example, though not given by Berman, is the use of fragmented prose, disjointed structure or a distanced, ironic narrative stance commonly found in modern and post-modern works (Layton and Schapiro 29). On the level of author, the story's narcissistic conflicts could ultimately relate back to the novelist's life, and in a larger sense, to society and culture. It was common in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries to lose a parent at an early age, and the link between narcissism and maternal loss could be found in Mary Shelley, Virginia Woolf and Emily Brontë (52). Thus it is through fiction that novelists memorialize their losses, and achieve for their characters as well as themselves a measure of immortality (53).

Berman also discusses the relevance of narcissism to the act of reading. Reading is narcissistic in the sense that the reader forms a "narcissistic alliance" with a fictional character and pursues his/ her own grandiose aspirations; it is not narcissistic because the reader's hunger for reading confirms his/ her powerful need for object relatedness, and as long as s/he remains attuned and attentive to the text and respects its unique otherness, s/he overcomes the tendency toward narcissistic reading (53). Berman concludes that the dynamics of reading, like that of all interpersonal activities, require a negotiation between the need for merging, on the one hand, and the impulse toward separation, on the other (53).

Berman's discussion on the act of reading, and more specifically, his idea of "negotiation" between merging and separation, could be supplemented by Bouson's attempt in mapping Kohutian concepts to literary criticism. Kohut, a post-Freudian

theorist, privileges the interrelated concepts of "empathy" and "countertransference" in his theory of the self and psychoanalytic practice. The former is defined as "vicarious introspection," the analyst's "capacity to think and feel oneself into the inner life of another person [the patient]," while "simultaneously retaining the stance of an objective observer" (Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* 175, see also Bouson 22). The latter is the analyst's total emotional reaction to the patient, which provides key insights into the patient's emotional states and unconscious fantasies and thus enhances the analyst's empathic contact with the patient (Bouson 24). Bouson, by referring to critics such as Elizabeth Wright and Jonathan Culler, as well as the psychoanalyst Gail Reed, suggests that what is at work in the reading practice is akin to "countertransference" (24) in the broadest sense. The reader, like the analyst, plays the role of a "participant-observer" (27); and reading is an "empathic event" and "dynamic process" that involves the reader's "participation" in, but also "active observation and interpretation" of the text's intended manipulation of its audience (28).

Berman's approach is useful to the current thesis, which is meant to be a psycho-cultural study of narcissism in three novels from English, Japanese and Chinese culture. By discussing narcissism on the level of author, and in a wider sense, the culture in which the work was produced, I aim at showing the intersections among cultural changes, human sensibilities and psychology. The level of author is, no doubt, deemed inseparable from the other three levels. Discussions on the cultural level are thus followed by those on the level of the characters and the text, and also the level of reading, in order to show how such narcissistic sensibilities are substantiated and worked out in literature by writers of different cultural origins.

The remaining part of this chapter gives an outline of various models of narcissism laid down by major theorists, and thus contains theoretical concepts which serve as the basis for analyzing the narcissistic motif in the chosen literary works.

Sigmund Freud's idea of narcissism as formulated in his "Narcissism: An Introduction" (1914) and some other writings will be the starting point of consideration. As narcissism is far from a monolithic concept, two post-Freudian theorists, Otto Kernberg and Heinz Kohut, are also chosen. The former, who belongs to the American school of object relations, offers a more classical view of narcissism; the latter, being the founder and reader of a new school of psychoanalysis called "self psychology," offers a more revolutionary view of the topic. Both are regarded to have "seized hold" of the psychoanalytic community in the last two decades (Berman 19), and much of the current debate over narcissistic personality "polarises" around their views (Mollon 77). For Kernberg, the main focus will be on his *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* (c1992), with only minor complements by Barbara Mahler, another member of the same school. For Kohut, the main focus will be on *The Analysis of the Self* (1971) and *The Restoration of the Self* (1977). Finally, I will turn to Phil Mollon's *The Fragile Self: The Structure of Narcissistic Disturbance* (1993) for additional insights on the topic which might have been neglected or downplayed by the three theorists.

Sigmund Freud

Freud begins his essay "On Narcissism: An Introduction" with Paul Nacke's clinical description of narcissism as a sexual perversion, which denotes the attitude of a person who treats his body as a sexual object, "who looks at it, that is to say, strokes it and fondles it till he obtains complete satisfaction through these activities" (545). For Freud, however, narcissism is not restricted to psychological disorders, but claims a place in normal human sexual development (546). He begins his argument by introducing his theory of the libido. At the start of mental life, the ego has a primary

cathexis of libido, the energy of which is yet undifferentiated (547-8). At the outbreak of the first object cathexis, its two components: sexual instincts, which aims at pleasure and the preservation of the species, and ego-instincts, which directs toward self-preservation, begin to separate (547-9). As a result of this differentiation, libido operates as a flow of "sexual energy" (549) on a two-way avenue, attaching to objects as "object-libido" when the person is in love, and re-investing itself into the ego as "ego-libido" when the person is asleep or suffering from organic diseases. (550-1).

Freud defines "primary narcissism" as inherent in all infants. As all sexual instincts are first attached to the satisfaction of the ego-instincts, an infant overestimates the power of his wishes and mental acts, and accordingly fails to relate to the world (547). In normal child development, self-cathexis is slowly converted to object-cathexis, resulting in the child's awareness of the external world, the distinction between self and other, and the ability to form interpersonal relationships. Since an adult cannot easily forgo the narcissistic satisfaction of his childhood, Freud suggests two ways in which he seeks to recover his lost perfection: the formation of the "ego-ideal" and the investment of parental love. Ego-libido of childhood narcissism, instead of passing completely to object cathexes, are drawn in large amounts into the formation of the "ego-ideal" (557). The new ideal ego possesses every perfection of the infantile ego, thus becoming its substitute and the target on which self-love is "displaced" (558). Similarly, parents' affectionate attitude toward their children and "overvaluation" of them: treating them as the "centre and core of creation," using them to fulfil their wishful dreams which they never carried out, ascribing them every perfection while forgetting all their shortcomings, only betray a "revival and reproduction" of their long-abandoned narcissism and its transformation into object-love (556).

In contrast to "primary narcissism," "secondary narcissism" occurs when the libido is withdrawn from the external world and reinvested into the self (546-7). As the

ability to love is the condition of good health, the "damming-up" of libido in the ego is thus unpleasurable and "pathogenic" (553). Freud further associates narcissism with femininity by differentiating two types of object choice, the "attachment/ anaclitic" versus the "narcissistic." A complete "attachment/ anaclitic" type of object choice is characteristic of the male (554), who, having passed through the early stage of autoerotism, nevertheless displays an "original attachment" to the one who provides him with the first autoerotic sexual satisfactions, by choosing his mother or anyone concerned with his feeding, care, and protection as his earliest sexual objects (553). The female, however, undergoes an intensification of their original narcissism brought about by the maturing of their sexual organs during puberty, which is unfavourable to the development of a true object-choice. Like the perverts and homosexuals, whose libidinal development has suffered some disturbance, she is therefore prone to the "narcissistic" type of object choice, and uses her own self as a model for love-objects (554).

Though Freud gives his most intensive treatment of narcissism in his 1914 essay, it is not the only essay in which the concept occurs. Mauro Mancia identifies three major phases in the evolution of Freudian thought with regard to narcissism (1). Whereas the second phase is represented by his 1914 essay (2), the first phase comprises his earlier works like *The Three essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood* (1910), and "Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)" (1911), in which he introduces the concept of narcissism in relation to the psychological mechanisms responsible for homosexuality (1). The third and final phase comprises his later works including *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and *The Ego and the Id* (1923). As Freud (1914) has previously affirmed the therapeutic value of love, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* he further observes that the loss of love leaves

behind a permanent injury to one's self-esteem in the form of a "narcissistic scar" which accordingly contributes to a "sense of inferiority." In *The Ego and the Id*, he modifies the whole anatomy of the psychic system implicit in the theories of the libido and narcissism and therefore adds profundity to the theory of narcissism previously developed. First, he considers the id, instead of the ego, as the reservoir of the libido (650). Moreover, he introduces the reality principle to account for the transformation of object libido into narcissistic libido and sees the ego as a "precipitate of abandoned object cathexes" (638): when the id's desires are externally frustrated, the desired objects are set up inside the ego, which in turn offers itself to the id as a love-object and makes good the id's loss by saying: "Look, you can love me too - I am so like the object" (639). As Stephen Frosh remarks, this plea is "central" in the trajectories of narcissism: behind self-aggrandisement, omnipotent phantasy, manipulativeness is the despairing attempt to attain the appearance of something worth loving, but without being truly the thing itself. In other words, "narcissistic libido" is not just love for the self, but love that covers up a loss (70).

Otto Kernberg

According to Kernberg, intrapsychic life begins with a self within which the ego and the id, aggressive and libidinal drives are yet "undifferentiated" (*Internal World and External Reality*, 95, see also Layton and Schapiro 16). This situation roughly corresponds to what Mahler calls the "autistic stage," in which the infant is not aware of a mothering agent (Mahler 44). With the impact of the mother-infant relationship, the first intrapsychic structure, that of a "fused self-object representation," gradually evolves. (*Internal World and External Reality*, 95, see also Layton and Schapiro 16). This corresponds to what Mahler defines as the "symbiotic stage," in

which the infant and his mother are an "omnipotent system" and a "dual unity within one common boundary" (Mahler 44). Whereas Kernberg (c1992) regards the term "primary narcissism" unwarranted (341), "autism" and "symbiosis" are the two stages of what Mahler identifies as "primary narcissism," and must occur before "the emergence of a rudimentary ego as a functional structure" (Mahler 48).

Both Mahler (3) and Kernberg identify the phase of "separation-individuation" which comes after the phase of "fused self-object representation." In this phase, the early ego, in order to achieve a stable identity, has to accomplish two tasks in quick succession. The first task is to differentiate self-images from object-images, so as to establish integrated ego boundaries (Kernberg 162). The second task is to integrate self- and object- images built up under the influence of libidinal drive derivatives (in simpler terms, the "good" self and object representations), with their corresponding self- and object-images built up under the influence of aggressive drive derivatives (the "bad" self and object representations). A successful synthesis means the tolerance of ambivalence and the establishment of "object-constancy" (163). In the fourth to fifth years of life, the superego, which is built up of three layers of object relations, is differentiated from the ego. Not only are ideal self and ideal object representations integrated into the ego ideal, which is then incorporated into the superego, but also what Kernberg refers to as a third layer internalization: "the realistic, demanding, and prohibitive aspects of the parents that characterize the later stages and completion of the Oedipus complex" (*Internal World and External Reality*, 99, see also Layton and Schapiro 16).

Following Hartmann's argument in *Essays on Ego Psychology* (1964), Kernberg (c1992) defines "normal narcissism" as the "libidinal investment of the self" (315) on the requisite of a healthy, "realistic" self-concept that incorporates both good and bad self-images (316). It is synonymous to a general sense of well-being, and

equated with the capacity for object love. "Pathological narcissism," however, is brought about by a "fusion" of ideal self, ideal object, and actual self images (231). Kernberg attributes this fusion to cold and unempathic parental figures who fail to provide the infant with the love and attention necessary for psychological health and whose "callousness, indifference, and nonverbalized spiteful aggression" set up the first condition for the child's need to defend against extreme envy and hatred (234-5). The child, by identifying his/ her actual self with his/ her own ideal self images, thus achieves a "defense against an intolerable reality in the interpersonal realm" (231): s/he could deny dependence on external objects and the internalized representations of these objects, as well as eliminate the normal tension between actual self on the one hand, and ideal self and ideal object on the other (231).

According to Kernberg, people of narcissistic personality appear to be symptom-free and well-functioning, and often become successful in their careers, all of which tend to conceal their pathological self structure and the consequential malfunctioning of their human relations. First, their delusions of grandiosity and their desperate attempt to bolster their self-images make their interactions with other people both "exploitative" and "parasitic" (228). Thus they expect love and admiration from others, yet offering little empathy for them (227); they idealize people from whom they expect narcissistic supplies, while depreciating those from whom they do not expect anything (228). Moreover, the formation of an "inflated self-concept" also means the "devaluation and destruction" of external objects as well as internalized object images (233). Even though these objects are still "alive" both internally and externally, the idealized people on whom they seem to depend turn out to be projections of their own aggrandized self concepts, while those who are not idealized are reduced to "lifeless shadows" (233). In addition, the fusion of ideal self and ideal object with actual self images prevents the former from being integrated and internalized into the formation

of a normal superego. The superego components which are internalized, such as prohibitive parental demands, are therefore not balanced by the loving aspects of the superego drawn from the ideal self and object images, and consequently preserve a "distorted, primitive, aggressive quality" (232). The projection onto others of the primitive characteristics of the superego as well as his/ her own exploitative nature accordingly turn the "shadowy" external objects into dangerous and dreadful enemies (232).

Heinz Kohut

Kohut's model of narcissism is inextricably tied up with his model of self formation. Admitting that the self is "not knowable in its essence" and any formulation of the self "incomplete" and "tentative" (311-2), he nevertheless hypothesizes two groups of processes that contribute to the development of the self in childhood. The first group lays down the rudiments of the self by the inclusion of the psychological structures that form the self and the obliteration of those that form the "non-self" (177). As a consequence of this separation, the "nuclear self" is formed, which serves the basis for a person's sense of being an "independent center of initiative and perception" (177).

In Kohut's model, however, it is the second group of processes that makes specific contributions to the formation of a cohesive self (1977, 185). It does so by offering the child two chances: the establishment of the cohesive "grandiose-exhibitionistic self," and the establishment of the cohesive "idealized parent-imago." To begin with, an infant initially experiences an "undisturbed primary narcissistic equilibrium," a psychological state of undifferentiated "perfection" (1971, 63-4). As the equilibrium of primary narcissism is soon disturbed by the "unavoidable" shortcomings

of maternal care, the child seeks to replace the previous perfection, both by establishing a grandiose and exhibitionistic image of the self, the "grandiose self," and by giving over the previous perfection to an admired, omnipotent, and yet transitional self-object, which is the "idealized parent imago" (1971, 25). Under optimal developmental conditions, the structure-building process called "transmuting internalization" occurs: the exhibitionism and grandiosity of the archaic grandiose self are gradually tamed by empathic mirroring and approval responses on the part of the mother, who is experienced as part of the self, and the whole structure becomes integrated into the adult personality, supplying the instinctual fuel for the person's ego-syntonic ambitions and purposes, for the enjoyment of his/ her activities and for important aspects of his/ her self-esteem (1971, 27-8); the idealized parent imago too becomes integrated into the adult personality, and, introjected as a person's idealized superego, it becomes an important component of psychic organization by holding up to him/ her the guiding leadership of its ideals (1971, 28). Kohut conceptualizes the relationship between the two poles of the self as a "tension arc," that is, as an "abiding flow of actual psychological activity" between the ambitions that drive a person and the ideals that lead him (1977, 180). The "firm self" thus has a "bipolar" structure of three major constituents: one pole from which emanate a person's ambitions, another pole that harbours his/ her ideals, and the intermediate arena of correlated talents and skills activated by the tension arc that establishes itself between ambitions and ideals (Kohut and Wolf 414).

According to Kohut, narcissism is a deficit in the self structure that arises when both the archaic grandiose self and the idealized parent imago fail to be incorporated into the adult personality, but are retained in their unaltered forms (1971, 28). Given the key role performed by parents as the child's earliest "selfobjects," the persistence of

archaic grandiosity is often due to an unempathic parent, who can neither recognize the child's in-phase needs for merger-mirroring-approval nor gradually discourage out-of-phase demands of the child's grandiose self, whereas the persistence of a need for an idealized selfobject often results from a parent's absence or refusal to allow the child to idealize and merger with him/ her. Kohut (1977) further traces these failures to social conditions, particularly the breakdown of family structures.

Since the narcissistically defective adults cannot provide themselves with sufficient self-approval, they are forever compelled to satisfy these essential needs through external sources: by extracting praise from or exercising unquestioned dominance over others or by merging with idealized figures. Moreover, their lack of a stable cohesive self makes them suffer from a fundamental weakness and deficiency in their personality. They may harbour feelings of greatness side by side with low self-esteem, and may respond to the frustration of their exhibitionistic impulses with shame and to the failure of their grandiose ambitions with rage. They may be prone to states of understimulation, a feeling of deadness and empty depression; overstimulation, the experience of being overwhelmed by unmodified and frightening archaic grandiose fantasies; and fragmentation, which is a frightening loss of a sense of self-continuity and cohesiveness (Kohut and Wolf 418-20). Finally, the preoccupation with the self also leads to a failure to form and maintain significant relationships, and to show empathy and humour toward others (1971, 23). As Kohut traces narcissistic disorders to empathic failure, he accordingly affirms the role of empathy and "transference" in therapeutic practice. The major transference configurations are the "mirror transference," wherein the analyst reliably responds to the patient's exhibitionism of his or her grandiose self, and the "idealising transference," wherein the analyst is perceived as a container of perfection. Through the establishment of these narcissistic transferences, the patient could mobilise and integrate the repressed exhibitionistic and

idealizing sectors of the personality, and experience an increase in the capacity for empathy, creativity, humour, and object love (1971, 296-328).

Phil Mollon: Toward a More Integrative Model

The theories on narcissism by Freud, Kernberg and Kohut no doubt exhibit a number of significant conceptual differences. Freud's theory is drive-based; Kernberg assigns a less central role to "libido" and "drives"; and Kohut, by advocating the primacy of the "self," further dislodges psychoanalysis from the libido theory. Freud believes in the narcissist's lack of object relations; Kernberg argues for the presence of an intense, primitive and threatening kind of object relations; and Kohut believes that all people, whether narcissistic or not, survive in a matrix of selfobjects. In addition, Freud says little on the causes of narcissism, while Kohut and Kernberg both agree on the crucial role played by the mother or the caretaker. Just as noticeable are the differences found between Kernberg and Kohut. For instance, Kernberg views pathological narcissism as a pathological self-structure clearly distinct from normal or "healthy" narcissism, whereas Kohut sees it as a fixation or developmental arrest of an archaic though normal, primitive self. For Kernberg, the basic feature of the personality of a narcissist is the incapacity for experiencing depressive reactions, which in turn leads to their failure to form committed relationships and to experience others as integrated, ambivalent objects; for Kohut, however, the state of depression is among one of the major sufferings to which the narcissist, lacking a cohesive self, is vulnerable. At the centre of Kernberg's model is the patient's intense rage and aggression which lies under his/ her surface calmness; at the core of Kohut's model is the concept of empathy which both accounts for the narcissist's disturbances and serves as the psychological antidote for his/ her poisoned self-esteem.

Despite these conceptual differences, the prominent themes in their models are remarkably similar. All see narcissism as a retreat toward the self. Thus individuals who suffer from narcissistic disturbances, regardless of the existence of the so-called "object relations," are all characterized by their limited capacity for empathy. The theories also place equal emphases on the imprisonment of these individuals in illusions of grandiosity and omnipotence, though Kernberg and Kohut further claim that these illusions could only be achieved and sustained through the reliance on, or even the exploitation of others. Here lie the major paradoxes of the narcissist early described by Abenheimer in his 1945 essay. First, in attempt to maintain one's grandiosity and have one's desires satisfied without conflict, the narcissist regresses into the longing to be cared for and looked after like a baby in the mother's womb or at the breast of an all-loving mother; having experienced the frustration by the mother, s/he is however not able to accept care and attention naively as the baby does (Abenheimer 323). Therefore, s/he feels safe only on the condition that the person who plays the role of the good mother serves him perpetually and exclusively (Ibid. 323). In order words, the narcissist "submits" in order to "enslave," to induce the love-object to be more attentive and indulgent to his wishes (Ibid. 323). Second, as the narcissist needs continuous approval from others, if s/he cannot find anybody sufficiently dependable in the outside world s/he may transfer his need for reassurance to anonymous masses whose admiration s/he courts by being perfectionistic and outstanding (Ibid. 323). Thus, while s/he displays aloofness and seems to withdraw his object libido, s/he is in fact more dependent on others than anybody else (Ibid. 323). Of course, all theorists highlight the emotional vulnerability of the narcissists due to their lack of a cohesive, stable sense of self.

The theories by Freud, Kernberg and Kohut are best supplemented by that of Phil Mollon, who attempts at offering a more comprehensive model of narcissism in

his book entitled *The Fragile Self: the Structure of Narcissistic Disturbance.* In addition to the three theorists discussed, he also draws in seven others such as Robbins, Ruthstein, Bursten, and Grunberger, and accordingly distinguishes two stages in the development of narcissistic disturbance. The first stage is rooted in the failure of communication in the early dyadic relationship between child and mother. He regards this phenomenon to be caused by a non-mirroring mother, and links it with the emphasis of several theorists upon the tendency of the mother to respond affirmatively not to the child's own initiatives, but rather those aspects of the child that are consistent with her own desires. The child, who functions as a selfobject to the mother, thus lacks a sense of "agency" and "efficacy" and could neither discover his/ her own desires nor gain any self-knowledge (110).

Mollon also wants to bring into his model the insights of other theorists that have been neglected previously. Examples include the oedipal issues emphasized by Grunberger and Rothstein; the overclose relationship to the mother which does not facilitate the child's development of autonomy, as pointed out by Robbins; the difficulties over separation-individuation, the mother's overruling of the child's moves toward independence as well as her denigration of the father, as highlighted by Bursten (Mollon 133-4). He therefore adds the second stage to the development of narcissistic disorders, which is the failure to progress from the dyadic relationship with the mother to the triadic or oedipal position which allows a place for the father. Quoting from Lacan, Mollon claims that the entry in the oedipal position is associated with the entry into the "symbolic order," thus leading to a "firmer sense of identity and of self-boundaries, both sexually and generationally," in other words, the sense of "lineage" (111). He further locates the foundation of identity in the primal scene, since it brings in the masculine force that acts as the differentiating principle defining limits and order (116). In addition, as primal fantasies correspond to both the origins and the endings of

an individual's existence, they have an intimate connection with the sense of "lineage" and function as limits to narcissistic aspirations (113). The crucial factor that determines the failure to enter the triadic position is the "malignant alliance" between the mother's omnipotent wish to do without the father, manifested in a dismissal of the primal scene or a partially accepted parental sexuality, and the child's oedipal desire to remain close to the mother and exclude the father (111). The child who remains predominantly in the dyadic opposition with mother, similar to the one reared by a non-mirroring care-keeper, suffers from an uncertainty about his or her identity, origins and desires.

Revisiting the Myth of Echo and Narcissus

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, "narcissism" in psychology was in fact named after the story of Narcissus dramatized by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*. It now becomes clear, however, that numerous theories on narcissism developed throughout the century in return allow a more inspired reading of the original mythical story. Deprived of a father figure, Narcissus fails to enter into the triadic, oedipal position, and remains uncertain about his identity and desires. In the dyadic relation, Liriope's anxiety about Narcissus makes her an overprotective mother who fails to separate with her son. Moreover, her feelings toward Narcissus might have been ambivalent, thus disabling her from playing the role of the empathic mother who meets the grandiozing and idealizing needs of the son. As a result, Narcissus manifests a lack of self-knowledge, a sense of self-sufficiency and a hunger for grandiosity and omnipotence. He seeks external confirmation from his admirers, but at the same time remains proud and indifferent to them.

The significance of Echo is worth exploring. To take Mollon's model into account, she could be seen as the projection of the image of the assaultive, smothering

Liriope, whose touch threatens to devour the identity of Narcissus (Berman 7). In the light of Kernberg's model, she becomes the projection of Narcissus' aggressive superego and his own exploitative nature both of which reduce her into his dreaded, though shadowy, enemy. The mirror also becomes a meaningful symbol. It is analogous to maternal mirroring essential to identity development, object relatedness and self-esteem (Berman 6); in the story, however, the mirror is lifeless and reflects little of the empathy which would have made possible what Kohut calls the "transference," and thus the salvation of Narcissus. In addition, Narcissus's gaze at his own reflection and his ultimate death in front of it offer a powerful dramatization of the narcissist's self-absorption, as well as his/ her entrapment in an illusory world, both of which prove to be self-defeating. In the light of this interpretation, the deadliness of the mirror further reflects the "cessation of growth" as narcissus becomes trapped in a "developmental cul de sac." (Mollon, 35).

Each of the subsequent chapters will give an intensive study on Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Yukio Mishima's *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, and Gu Cheng's *Ying'er*. The fifth and final chapter, "Narcissism, Culture and Self," will relate the universality of narcissism to the more general changes in culture and, as a result, the concept of self, as well as speculate on how cultural differences affect narcissistic manifestations.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ARTIST AND HIS PORTRAIT:

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

Karl M. Abenheimer defines the dandy as a "prototype of narcissism" (323). Due to his snobbish aloofness and feeling of superiority toward the masses, the dandy constantly claims to be an independent individual who does not care what other people think of him and indulges in all kinds of extravagances. However, the dandy is also extremely conventional in being perfectly dressed at all times and in wanting to shine as a wit and to be admired (323). Abenheimer describes Oscar Wilde as a typical dandy: though he never ceased claiming his independence from moral and social conventions, he courted public attention and admiration with showmanlike propaganda which was worthy of any modern dictator (323). It seems, therefore, Wilde and his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* will serve as a good starting point for my investigation into narcissism in English Literature. More specifically, in this novel, the motif of narcissism is inextricably tied up with that of aestheticism, which is the dominant spirit of the "Yellow Nineties." This chapter thus begins with a discussion on the author and his cultural background; it then moves onto the novel itself, and explores how the motif of narcissism is weaved into its characters and the text; finally, it ends by seeing how the novel initiates the reader to take on the role of a participant-observer, who, like

Kohut's analyst, both understands and observes their characters/ patients through a relation with them that is both empathetic and distancing.

The Victorian Age and the Yellow Nineties

The reign of Queen Victoria (1830-1901) brought England to its highest point of development as a world power. The early industrialization of England meant a shift from a way of life based on the ownership of land to a modern urban economy based on trade and manufacturing (Abrams 891), which enabled the country to capture markets all over the globe. The enormous profits gained from trade also led to extensive capital investments in all continents (Abrams 891-2). After England had become the "world's workshop," its capital London became, from 1870 on, the "world's banker," and by the end of the century it was the "world's foremost imperial power" (Abrams 892) The widespread prosperity, as a result of the growth of trade, commerce and colonization, both fostered in the middle class a sense of duty and a desire for public esteem and informed efforts to forge a stable, well-regulated society (Gillespie 4). The values of duty, respectability, commercial success, middle-class morality, though frequently undercut by individual and social behaviour, nevertheless occupied a central position in the Victorian consciousness (Gillespie 5).

While the Victorians shared a sense of satisfaction in the industrial and political pre-eminence of England, they also suffered from an "anxious" sense of "displacement" in a world made "alien" by technological changes that had been exploited too quickly for the adaptive powers of the human psyche (Abrams 892). Apart from intense feelings of alienation and displacement, their view toward humanity was also jeopardized. The damage could be attributed to the discoveries of geology, which, by extending the history of the earth backward millions of years, reduced the stature of the human race in time; and astronomy, which were likewise "disconcerting" by extending

knowledge of stella distances to "dizzying expanses" (Abrams 897). However, it was biology, more specifically, Darwin's theory of natural selection, that launched the greatest attack. While evolution was assumed by some to be synonymous with progress, most readers recognized its conflict not only with the concept of creation derived from the Bible, but also with long-established values attached to the special role of humanity in the world. As a result, mankind was reduced into further "nothingness" (Abrams 897). Thus, the antagonism between religion and science, which could be traced to the Enlightenment, was further heightened during the Victorian. To the Utilitarians, led by Jeremy Bentham, religious belief was merely an "outmoded superstition"; opponents of utilitarianism, however, argued that people had always needed a faith (Abrams 896). Some of them, like Carlye, abandoned institutional Christianity, yet sought to retain some sort of substitute religious belief. Others, like John Henry Newman, argued that only a powerful, dogmatic, and traditional religious institution could withstand the attacks of irreverent thinkers (Abrams 896).

The late Victorian England was plagued by a number of factors which challenged its stability and security. Domestic issues included its relations with the Irish and the rise of the Labour Party as a political and economic force. Foreign issues included the emergence of Germany that threatened England's naval and military position as well as its exclusive pre-eminence in trade and industry, and the recovery of the United States after the Civil War which in turn provided new and serious competition to England in both industry and agriculture (Abrams 898). All these, coupled with the continuous breakdown of Victorian standards, intensifies the aura of *fin-de-siècle* typical of the close of the century.

John Gross, in *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, describes how literature reacts to the spirit of the late Victorian:

> Whatever one puts it down to - economic difficulties, foreign competition - it is undoubtedly possible to detect by the 1880's a widespread faltering of Victorian self-confidence, a new edginess and uncertainty about the future. Among writers, such a climate might have been supposed to favour a mood of determined realism, and so, in some cases, it did. But the commonest reaction was withdrawal, a retreat into nostalgia, exoticism, fine writing, belles-lettres (Bergonzi 379).

Examples of "determined realism" are readily found in the works of Thomas Hardy, Henry James and George Gissing, which depart from the familiar forms of Victorian fiction and study characters who are alienated from their society (Bergonzi 392-97). The signs of "withdrawal" and "retreat," and "exoticism" are likewise remarkable. Yeats, in his early years as a poet, withdrew into an ideal world of myth and imagination (Bergonzi 385). The *fin-de-siècle* mood also led to a taste for fictional romances. In Robert Louis Stevenson's adventure stories, like *Treasure Island* (1883) and *Kidnapped* (1886), human beings escape from the trivial contingencies of social life and are caught up in primitive and archetypal forms of action (Bergonzi 389). Above all, Aestheticism became the predominant spirit of the nineties. Artists, representing the Aesthetic movement, were very much aware of living at the end of a great century and often cultivated a "deliberately fin-de-siècle pose," and their prose and poetry were often characterized by "a studied languor, a weary sophistication, a search for new ways of titillating jaded palates" (Abrams 899).

Wilde's *Intentions* and His Aesthetic Thinking

A number of factors might have influenced the development of Oscar Wilde's aesthetic thinking. As a young boy, he already displayed signs of strange passion for

beauty. At Trinity College of Dublin, he did not only become the student of Reverend J.P. Mahaffy and Robert Yelverton Tyrrell, thus cultivated his passion in Greek things and excelled in classicism (Ellmann 28-30); by widely reading Swinburne and John Addington Symond he developed his Pre-Raphaelite sympathies, dandiacal dress, Hellenic bias and contempt for conventional morality (Ellmann 34), and emerged an "exponent of aestheticism" (Ellmann 31). At Oxford he further came under the impact of Walter Pater, who, as a historical relativist, was subversive of Victorian certainties and assumptions, and sceptical about all fixed positions, doctrines, or theories (Bergonzi 380). For Pater, human life was "fleeting and uncertain"; instead of pursuing "inaccessible ultimate truths," man should instead strive to refine his sensations. In *A History of the Renaissance*, he prioritizes art as the realm where the finest sensations are to be found and where we have the best hope of preserving the intense but fleeting moments of experience. Wilde never ceased to speak of *The Renaissance* as his "golden book" (Ellmann 47), and in *De Profundis* he described it as one which has had such a "strange influence" over his life (Bergonzi 380).

Wilde's most essential ideas on aestheticism are found in the four essays that make up his *Intentions*, particularly "The Decay of Lying" and "The Critic as Artist." In "The Decay of Lying," he asserts the independence and perfection of art. Art never expresses anything but itself (1091), finds its own perfection within itself, and is never judged by any external standard of resemblance (1082). His idealization of art is accompanied by his devaluation of nature: he reduces the "infinite variety of nature" into a "pure myth" that is found not in nature herself, but resides in the "imagination, fancy or cultivated blindness" of the man who looks at her (1071). Art, by revealing to us the "lack of design" in nature, as well as her "curious crudities," "extraordinary monotony" and "absolutely unfinished condition," represents the "gallant attempt" undertaken by man to "teach nature her proper place" (1071). To further emphasize the

supremacy of art over nature, Wilde claims that all "bad art" comes from returning to life and nature and elevating them into ideals. Thus, even though life and nature may sometimes be used as part of the "rough materials" of art, they must be "translated into artistic conventions" before they are of any real service (1091). Finally, both life and external nature imitate art: for the former, art presents various forms through which the imitative instinct of life finds its expression; for the latter, the only effects that nature shows to us are, after all, those we have already seen through poetry or in paintings (1091).

Given the writer's beliefs in the independence and supremacy of art, especially with regard to nature, it is not surprising that he locates the proper aim of art in "lying," or the "telling of beautiful untrue things" (1091-2) and by writing the essay, launches a protest against the "decay of lying" in the works of his contemporaries (1072). For Wilde, the true essence of literature is its "distinction, charm, beauty and imaginative power," and the only real people are those who never exist (1075). According to him, however, the modern novelist does not even have the courage on other people's ideas, but insists on going directly to life for everything, and as a result only presents us with "dull facts under the guise of fiction" (1073). With the return to life and nature, our work becomes "vulgar," "common" and "uninteresting" (1080); with the "monstrous worship of facts," art becomes "sterile" and beauty passes away from the land (1074). Wilde also foresees need of the "cultured and fascinating liar" to the society, whose simple aim is "to charm, to delight and to give pleasure," and who is the "true founder of social intercourse" and the "very basis of civilized society" (1081).

The polarization between art and life is continued in "The Critic as Artist." The writer describes life as a "puppet-master" that offers man, the "puppet,' nothing but bitterness and disappointment (1132). Hence it is only through art that man can shield himself from the sordidness of actual existence and realize his "perfection" (1135). The

essay further defines the nature of "criticism" and the role of the "critic." For Wilde, criticism is itself an art. The critic occupies the same relation to the work of art that he criticizes, as the artist does to the visible world of form and colour, or the unseen world of passion and thought (1124). Moreover, criticism does not confine itself to discovering the real intention of the artist, and does not necessarily bear any obvious resemblance to the work of art it criticizes, but instead treats it as a starting-point for a new creation and puts materials into a form that is new and delightful (1125-8). The critical instinct, being both creative and independent, in fact forms the essential part of all artistic creation. An alliance is therefore drawn between art and criticism, the artist and the critic, and the concept of art is broadened as a whole.

Wilde's Aesthetic Thinking and Theories on Narcissism

Jeffrey Berman in his essay does point out several points of convergence between Wilde's aesthetic thinking and theories on narcissism, but the cross-references to Freud and to Wilde's other critical works make his essay lose much of its precision (refer especially to 152-155). A mere comparison of various theorists mentioned in the previous chapter with Wilde's essays discussed above, however, is enough to make a clear and precise delineation of the pattern of narcissism inherent in Wilde's "new aesthetics." First, as people with narcissistic personality suffer from low self-esteem and find the world in which they live cold and malignant, the artist too regard their life as unbearably hostile and imperfect. For the former, the idealized self-objects could be anyone they have come to idealize; for the latter, the idealized self-object is art. Thus, the former maintain a relatively stable, though temporal, sense of self by merging with their idealized self-objects, the latter maintains his tenuous existence through a retreat into art and a massive denial of his own nature. In addition, people of narcissistic

personality, whose relation to others is self-directed and exploitative, display an utter lack of empathy; Wilde's artist, whose choice is the world of art instead of that of human, could not be more empathetic.

Wilde's aestheticism and its inherent narcissistic pattern are best exemplified in his 1891 novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Accordingly, the three main characters: Lord Henry Wotton, Basil Hallward and Oscar Wilde - all aesthetes and narcissists - serve as good starting points for my study.

Art and the "Self" in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Lord Henry Wotton, like Oscar Wilde himself, idealizes art and devalues nature. First, he puts great value on beauty, claiming that "Beauty is a form of Genius - is higher, indeed, than Genius, as it needs no explanation" (21). However, life is transient and youth, no matter how "marvellous" (21), cannot last: "You have only a few years in which to live really, perfectly, and fully. When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it, and then you will suddenly discover that there are no triumphs left for you ..." (22). The purpose of life, therefore, is "self-development" (17), and the perfect realization of one's own self :

> I believe that if one man were to live out his life fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream - I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that we would forget all the maladies of mediaevalism, and return to the Hellenic ideal - to something finer, richer, than the Hellenic ideal, it may be" (18).

He prioritizes the individual over the social: in order to fulfil oneself, one should not be afraid to defile established moral codes:

> "To be good is to be in harmony with one's self. ... One's own life - that is the important thing. ... Besides, Individualism has really the higher aim. Modern morality consists in accepting the standard of one's age. I consider that for any man of culture to accept the standard of his age is a form of the grossest immorality" (78).

He further defines a new "Hedonism" (22) as the means of self-fulfilment: "Nothing can cure the soul but the sense, just as nothing can cure the senses but the soul" (20). By treating life as art, a person can "absorb" the "colour of life," while forgetting its "details"; he can appreciate the elements of beauty even in his own tragedy, and become the "spectator," instead of "actor," of his life (101).

It is unclear from the text whether Lord Henry lives in strict accordance with all his maxims. As his friend, Basil Hallward, remarks: "You [Lord Henry] never say a moral thing, and you never do a wrong thing" (4), he does not so much follow his own words, than to exercise his influence with his words over others: "To project one's soul into some gracious form ...; to hear one's own intellectual views echoed back to one ...; to hear one's own intellectual views echoed back to one ...; to convey one's temperament into another ...." (35), and to participate vicariously in their passions: "And how delightful other people's emotions were! - much more delightful than their ideas, it seemed to him. One's own soul, and the passions of one's friends - those were the fascinating things in life" (13).

Dorian Gray proves an ideal subject to Lord Henry's "experimental method" (58). First, the story of Dorian's parentage is strangely romantic. Moreover, his awakening from innocence to a realization of his own power is enthralling. Thus, Lord Henry compares talking to Dorian as playing an exquisite violin (25), exerts an intellectual control over the youth and reduces him into a work of art ("*objet d'art*") (Berman 158): "Life has been your art. You have set yourself to music. Your days are

your sonnet" (217). Being a Narcissus, Lord Henry seeks to sustain his idealization and maintain his self-worth by exploiting and corrupting Dorian, whom he offers little genuine empathy and is merely interested in as an object.

Basil Hallward's unremarkable appearance, such as his "coal-black hair" and his "rugged strong face" that contains nothing more than an "intellectual expression," is commented on by his friend Henry Wotton (2-3). For Basil, Dorian's beauty makes him an emblem of perfection: "visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose memory haunts us artists like an exquisite dream" (114), and of harmony: "Unconsciously he defines for me the lines of a fresh school, a school that is to have in it all the passion of the romantic spirit, all the perfection of the spirit that is Greek: The harmony of soul and body" (10). Most importantly, Dorian's personality suggests to Basil an "entirely new manner in art" and "new mode of style" which enables him to "recreate" life in a way that was hidden from him in the past (10). The artist, by creating a perfect portrait of Dorian, thus transforms him into a work of art, and participates vicariously in the portrait's immortal beauty (Berman 163).

Not only does Basil Hallward maintain his self-esteem by resorting to art and by his merging with his idealized self-objects: both Dorian's portrait, and to a lesser extent, Dorian himself; his self-objects become merely "shadows" of his own creation. He admits, "every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter" (5), invests himself into the portrait, and treats Dorian simply as a "motive in art," and reduces him into a "manner of painting," to the "curves of certain lines" and the loveliness and subtlety of "certain colours" (11). In other words, Dorian has no soul or spirit of his own; but merely functions as the artist's "Muse or Anima," whose value lies in his "unconscious stimulation of the male artist's energy" (Oates 425).

Basil's idealization might have, for a time, sustained his life and art; at the same time, however, he is victimized by the lack of distance between the painter and the subject, the narcissist and his idealized self-objects. His intense possessiveness toward Dorian makes him reluctant to disclose the youth's name to Lord Henry. "When I like people immensely I never tell their names to any one. It is like surrendering a part of them" (4). He grows "jealous" of everyone to whom Dorian speaks (114). He ignores Lord Henry's suggestion to send the portrait to Grosvenor, and refuses to exhibit it at all (2). When informed of Dorian's engagement to Sibyl, his reaction is first outrageous: "Impossible!" (72), followed by that of loss and desolation: "A strange sense of loss came over him. He felt that Dorian Gray would never again be to him all that he had been in the past. ... When the cab drew up at the theatre, it seemed to him that he had grown years older" (80). As an artist, Basil's life also becomes completely dependent on Dorian: "He [Dorian] is all art to me now" (9); "But you [Dorian] must come and sit to me yourself again. I can't get on without you." (111). Consequently, Dorian's departure results in his loss of creativity: "It seemed to me to have lost something." Lord Henry comments on the works produced by Basil during the period when his close relationship with Dorian has come to an end, "It had lost an ideal. When you [Dorian] and he [Basil] ceased to be great friends, he ceased to be a great artist" (214).

At his first meeting with Dorian, Basil is as yet ignorant of the destructiveness of his dream-image; nevertheless, he has already experienced violent and inexplicable spasms of emotion that attend a fatal attraction: "I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself" (6) (Oates 425). According to Jeffrey Berman, what makes their attraction "fatal" is Basil's failure to view the portrait as a "transitional object" that "creates a potential space between self and other" (Berman 161). Thus, he could not help being disenchanted as he notices

Dorian's utter indifference to the suicide of Sibyl Vane: "But you [Dorian] were simple, natural, and affectionate then ... Now, I don't know what has come over you. You talk as if you had no heart, no pity in you" (108). The unveiling of the portrait proves unbearable to him, as he discovers that despite his "pure, bright, innocent face," and his "marvellous untroubled youth" (150), Dorian is even worse than those who talk against him fancy him to be (157). When he mourns: "I worshipped you too much. I am punished for it" (158), he has probably discovered, only too late, the danger of idealizing, as well as identifying with art.

Dorian Gray and Narcissism

Among all characters, Dorian Gray offers the richest resource for the study on narcissism. The inextricable bond between Dorian Gray and the figure of Narcissus is established right from the beginning of the novel. Lord Henry, looking at the portrait, describes Dorian Gray as a "young Adonis" who looks as if he were made of "ivory and rose-leaves," and a Narcissus, a "brainless beautiful creature" who should always be present in winter when they have no flowers to look at (3). Meeting Dorian Gray for the first time, he is again struck by the youth's incredible beauty, which includes his physicality: his "wonderfully handsome, finely-curved scarlet lips," "frank blue eyes" and "crisp gold hair," and also pertains to his spiritual attributes: "All the Candour of youth was there, as well as all youth's passionate purity" (13).

Though not much is said about the background of Dorian Gray in the story, it is still possible, on the basis of a few facts available about his parentage, for the reader to "re-create" his childhood situation that explains his proneness to narcissism. His parents, a nameless "penniless" man and Margaret Devereux (32), died early, the former in a duel and the latter within a year after the death of her husband. Thus any

dyadic relationship between him and his mother is extremely short, and due to the absence of the father figure, it fails to progress to a triad that is essential to a firm identity, clear self-boundaries and a certainty about one's own desires. Since the death of his parents, he was put under the care of his grandfather, Lord Kelso, whose hatred for his grandson makes him a "non-mirroring" caretaker who refuses to satisfy neither the mirroring and approving nor the idealizing needs of the young Dorian.

For a time, Dorian Gray's narcissistic traits lie dormant, and he also stays ignorant of his charm and youth. He is largely indifferent to Hallward's worshipful appeal to his vanity: "Basil Hallward's compliments had seemed to him to be merely the charming exaggerations of friendship. He had listened to them, laughed at them, forgotten them. They had not influenced his nature" (25); and is only half-stirred by Henry's deliberately experimental evocation of his own egoism: "Then came Lord Henry Wotton with his strange panegyric on youth, his terrible warning of its brevity" (25). It is his perception of the finished portrait that leads to his complete awakening: "When he saw he drew back, and his cheeks flushed for a moment with pleasure. A look of joy came into his eyes, as if he had recognized himself for the first time. ... The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation" (24-5). Adopting a language not unlike that of Lord Henry, he mourns over the sorrow of his own predicament, thus prays in desperation for the portrait to grow old, and for himself to remain young forever.

> "How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June ... If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that - for that - I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!" (25-6)

For the rest of the novel, Dorian remains young and innocent in appearance, while his picture both ages and corrupts in accordance with his degradation. This "miraculous" exchange between life and art, the character and his portrait serves a visual symbol of Dorian Gray's treatment of his life as art. Following the dictims of Lord Henry, Dorian Gray defines man as a "being with myriad lives and myriad sensations" and a "complex multiform creature that bore within itself strange legacies of thought and passion" (143). Obsessed with a "wild desire" to know everything about life (47), he thus exposes himself to a multiplicity of sensations in the course of his life: he participates in the Roman Catholic communion, studies perfumes and the secrets of their manufacture, devotes himself to music, to the study of jewels, embroideries and tapestries, and crams his house with treasures.

In order to procure extraordinary sensations, Dorian Gray involves others in his life's drama, yet remains detached from what might be called normal human emotions:

> "A man who is master of himself can end a sorrow easily as he can invent a pleasure. I don't want to be at the mercy of his emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them and to dominate them." (108)

One supreme example is his brief story with Sibyl Vane. Though he insists on his appreciation of both Sibyl's "personality" and her "consummate art-instinct" (55), it is obvious that he merely treats Sibyl as a source of inspiration; in other words, he loves Sibyl only as an artist, but not as a human being:

> "I have seen her in every age and in every costume. Ordinary women never appeal to one's imagination. They are limited to their century. No glamour ever transfigures them. One knows their minds as easily as one knows their bonnets. One can always find them. There is no mystery in any of them. They ride in the Park in the morning, and chatter at tea-parties in the afternoon. They have their stereotyped smile, and their fashionable manner. They are quite obvious. But an

> actress! How different an actress is! Harry! why didn't you tell me that the only thing worth loving is an actress?" (51)

Therefore, he does not have the slight interest in Sibyl's personal history (53). Furthermore, he cruelly rejects her when she ceases to be a good actress and his source of imagination:

> "You have killed my love. You used to stir my imagination. Now you don't even stir my curiosity. You simply produce no effect. I loved you because you were marvellous, because you had genius and intellect, because you realized the dreams of great poets and gave shape and substance to the shadows of art. You have thrown it all away. You are shallow and stupid. ... Without your art you are nothing. I would have made you famous, splendid, magnificent. The world would have worshipped you, and you would have borne my name. What are you now? A third-rate actress with a pretty face." (86-7)

He reacts to Sibyl's suicide not with pain and regret of a lover, but with the indifference and detachment of a spectator.

> "And yet I must admit that this thing that has happened does not affect me as it should. It seems to me to be simply like a wonderful ending to a wonderful play. It has all the terrible beauty of a Greek tragedy, a tragedy in which I took a great part, but by which I have not been wounded." (100)

Another supreme example of Dorian Gray's aesthetic attitude toward life and his consequential emotional detachment occurs when he discloses his portrait in its corrupted state to Basil, and watches the horror-stricken Basil with the "passion of a spectator," and with a "strange expression that one sees on the faces of those who are absorbed in a play when some great artist is acting" (156). Dorian's murder of Basil also deserves particular attention.

> The mad passions of a hunted animal stirred within him, and he loathed the man who was seated at the table, more than in his whole life he had ever loathed anything. Something glimmered on the top of the painted chest that faced him. ... As soon as he got behind him, he seized it, and turned round ... He rushed at him, and dug the knife into the great vein that is behind the ear, crushing the man's head down on the table, and stabling again and again. (158)

Joyce Carol Oates considers the murder of Basil by Dorian "symbolically appropriate" since the former has played an "unambiguous" role in the "damnation" of the latter (425). According to Kerry Powell, Dorian has murdered Basil in an "irrational compulsion - such is the power of art - to live [his life] in imitation of the painted likenesses which represent [him]" (Humphreys 524). In my reading, however, Dorian's anger could also be seen to have sprung from Basil's disillusionment with him and as a consequence, his refusal to continue his worship of the youth: "Christ! what a thing I must have worshipped! It has the eyes of a devil" (137), "I worshipped you too much. I am punished for it. You worshipped yourself to much. We are both punished" (138). If Basil and Dorian have served as idealized self-objects, thus sustaining each other's self-esteem and illusions of grandiosity, such idealization steers quickly to devaluation. While Basil is merely disillusioned, Dorian Gray's admiration for him takes a more dramatic turn into intense hatred, and could only end itself in violence.

By the very end of the novel, Dorian feels certain to begin a "new life," and to cultivate a sincere and uncontaminated relationship with the country girl, Hetty Merton (209-210). Nevertheless, his withdrawal from human emotions has gone so far that he doubts his motivation, whether it has been "mere vanity," "desire for a new sensation," "passion to act a part that sometimes makes us do things finer than we are ourselves," or a combination of all of the above (222). At the same time, his resort to the world of

art never frees him from the dangers of life. He indulges in opium to achieve temporal freedom from the memory of his own guilt (Chapter XVI):

> Memory, like a horrible malady, was eating his soul away. From time to time he seemed to see the eyes of Basil Hallward looking at him. Yet he felt he could not stay. The presence of Adrian Singleton troubled him. He wanted to be where no one would know who he was. He wanted to escape from himself. (188)
>
> Each man lived his own life, and paid his own price for living it. The only pity was one had to pay so often for a single fault. One had to pay over and over again, indeed. In her dealings with man Destiny never closed her accounts. (190)

When he discovers that he was hunted by Sibyl's brother, James Vane, he is "sick with a wild terror of dying" (199) to the point of spending all his time inside his own room. He admits to Lord Henry: "I have no terror of Death. It is the coming of Death that terrifies me. Its monstrous wings seem to wheel in the leaden air around me" (204). By the very end of the novel, he feels a wild longing for the "unstained purity of his boyhood - his rose-white boyhood" (219). In attempt to free himself from the burden of his past, he destroys the picture that shows his guilt-ridden conscience.

The Urban Setting, Mersmerism and the Portrait

The setting of the novel is London, from the refined, upper-class society made up of Lord Fermor's house at Albany (30) and Lord Henry's house in Mayfair (44), to the sordid world consisting of Vane's shabby home in the Euston Road (70), the little theatre "with great flaring gas-jets and gaudy play-bills" at which Sibyl works (48) and public-houses of drunkards, "dim men and women" (184). E. San Juan, in his essay "The Picture of Dorian Gray and the Form of Fiction," points out the inextricable

linkage between the colourful city and the principles of "new hedonism," the analogy between the city and the stage which initiate the imitation of life after art by the characters, and also indirectly, their dual roles as both "actors" and "spectators" of their own lives:

> Since novelty and multiplicity of sensation, both of which Dorian elects as his dominating passions, abound more in the city than anywhere else, the city with its gorgeous courts and loathsome gutters assumes the function of a vast stage where life solidifies in the rigid shapes of an art-work. This is exactly the effect produced by the massive catalogue of jewels, treasures, bric-a-brac in chapter eleven. (55)

San Juan also pays much attention to the style of writing employed. He notes how the typical impulses, like that of Dorian: "I love beautiful things that one can touch and handle ... ," or that from Lord Henry's preaching: "all experience is of value" lead to the novel's peculiar texture, that is, one interwoven with a "primitive version" of "stream-of-consciousness" technique in which "unremitting attention" is paid to "surfaces of objects," and also "contours, masses, outlines of appearance" that evoke the "greatest density of sensations" (56). He also notices how the syntax of sentences sags with "excessive load of decorative epithets, substantives, phrasal units" (55).

The descriptions of the urban locale in which the whole novel is circumscribed also correspond with a dominant phenomenon in narcissism, that is, the fatal lack of empathy or object relations and as a consequence, the imprisonment of the individual in his fragile self. For the most part, the story takes place in Dorian's room, a physical setting that becomes the stage where the narcissist's psychological activities occur: his reminiscences, pondering, exhilaration and fears. Other locations are likewise described in a way that impress the reader with the feeling of burden and claustrophobia. Basil Hallward's studio is heavily loaded with odours, from the "rich odour of roses" to the

"heavy scent of lilac" which are only intensified by the "light summer wind" (1). The "shabby house" where Dorian Gray smokes opium and seeks to free himself from the burden of his past consists of a "long low room," and a "floor covered with ochre-coloured sawdust, trampled here and there into mud, and stained with dark rings of spilt liquor," (187) thus only serves as a mirror of his own depravity. Yet the claustrophobic effect is not limited to indoor settings. As Dorian Gray is wandering in the street, he finds himself losing his way in a "labyrinth of grimy streets and black, grassless squares" (48). On his way to the opium house:

> The moon hung low in the sky like a yellow skull. From time to time a huge misshapen cloud stretched a long arm across and hid it. The gas-lamps grew fewer, and the streets more narrow and gloomy. Once the man lost his way, and had to drive back half a mile. A steam rose from the horse as it splashed up the puddles. The side-windows of the hansom were clogged with a grey-flannel mist. (184-5)
>
> The way seemed interminable, and the streets like the thick web of some sprawling spider. The monotony became unbearable, and, as the mist thickened, he felt afraid. (185)

His attempted escape from the sordidness of his past only leads him to another labyrinth, and returns him to another prison even more deadening and fearful.

According to various theories on narcissism outlined in the previous chapter, people with narcissistic disorders are very often characterized by their charming personalities. Interestingly, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde uses forms of the word "charming" over sixty times (McCollister 17-8). Although he sometimes employs the word simply to mean "pleasing," more often the word also suggests a "character's ability to control the thoughts and deeds of others" (McCollister 17). The charm of Dorian Gray is obvious from the very beginning of the novel. According to

Basil's description of his first meeting with Dorian, the artist was charmed: when his eyes met those of Dorian, he grew pale and felt that Dorian's personality could "absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself" (6). Similarly, Lord Henry tells Dorian in their first meeting: "You are too charming to go in for philanthropy, Mr. Gray - far too charming" (15). Though Sybil as an actress is able to charm her audience, she remains under the spell of Dorian. She never uses Dorian's name, but rather calls him "Prince Charming." As potential power lies in the knowledge of one's name, her ignorance of his name suggests that she is both subject to him and unable to manipulate him (McCollister 19).

Lord Henry has also mesmerized Dorian: "He [Lord Henry] felt that the eyes of Dorian Gray were fixed on him. ... Dorian Gray never took his gaze off him, but sat like one under a spell, smiles chasing each other over his lips, and wonder growing grave in his darkening eyes" (41) and charmed him with his words: "The few words that Basil's friend had said to him [Dorian] - words spoken by chance, no doubt, and with wilful paradox in them - had touched some secret chord that had never been touched before, but that he felt was now vibrating and throbbing to curious pulses" (18). To a lesser extent, Basil has charmed Dorian Gray when they first met: "We [Basil and Dorian] would have spoken to each other without any introduction. I am sure of that. Dorian told me so afterwards. He, too, felt that we were destined to know each other" (7). When Basil tells Lord Henry the name of the young man in the portrait, he does so unwillingly, for "it is like surrendering a part of them" to disclose names (4). This notion aligns with the powers often attributed to black magic, through which a witch can control a person by fashioning a likeness of him or her (McCollister 18). However, Basil soon claims his total dependence on Dorian for his life as an artist, which is an evidence that his power is soon paralysed and overtaken by that of the youth.

Finally, the portrait of Dorian Gray stands at the centre of the novel. For Dorian, it is both the "origin" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 153) and the "record" all his shame (Humphreys 524). He "reinscribes" upon the original portrait every influence that he "absorbs" (Humphreys 525): both the initial worship by Basil and the influence by Lord Henry, and "exerts" (Humphreys 525): from his desertion of Sibyl Vane, his murder of Basil Hallward, to his hypocritical relation with Hetty Merton. Moreover, Dorian's ambiguous attitude toward the picture also corresponds to the narcissist's attitude toward himself/ herself. As the narcissist's self-hate very often underlies and accompanies self-love, the moments of exhilaration Dorian has experienced as he looks at the picture are accompanied by pangs of self-loathing, which become the most intense as the novel reaches its end: "He [Dorian] went in quietly .... and dragged the purple hanging from the portrait. A cry of pain and indignation broke from him. The thing was still loathsome - more loathsome, if possible, than before" (221). His suicidal act of stabbing the portrait leads to his instant death, followed by another exchange in place between life and art, his appearance and his portrait. According to Gillespie, the horrid death of Dorian Gray could be seen as his own punishment for his failure to sustain his innovative power and imagination, a flaw deemed intolerable by Lord Henry's code of new hedonism (52). In the light of my previous interpretation, however, his ending would both suggest his failure to treat his life as art, and the ultimate failure of art in offering a refuge for the escapist, narcissistic artist.

It is now clear how the breakdown of Victorian values in the nineties made possible, as demonstrated by Oscar Wilde's statements on Aestheticism and his characters in his novel, the retreat into narcissism. Nevertheless, such narcissistic sentiments are not limited to the dandy circle of the late nineteenth-century England. From the very beginning of the novel, a serious reader is but swept by the flood of

sensations of London, mesmerized by the maxims of Lord Henry and Dorian Gray, and get suffocated by the deadlock of the Narcissus. To make this argument more convincing, a brief look at Wilde's very peculiar mode of writing, and even the reception of his novel by the public at its first publication, are required.

Narcissism and the Reader

In his "Preface" to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde contends that "it is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors." According to the writer, "each man sees his own sin in Dorian Gray" ("Letter to the Editor of the `Scots Observer,' " 9 July 1890, in Richard Ellmann, *The Artist as Critic*, 248; see also Humphreys 527). Some early critics attempt to distance the novel from the reading public either by vicious mockery or by labelling Dorian's life "unnatural." (Humphreys 526). Nevertheless, a lot of critics and readers have found the novel violently disturbing. One reviewer in *St. James's Gazette* expresses the fear of contamination through influence and accuses the character of "defiling English society with the moral pestilence which is incarnate in him" (Humphreys 526). Another in *Daily Chronicle* describes the book as "poisonous," its atmosphere "heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction" (Gillespie 22-3). Despite the prejudice inherent in most negative comments, it is not hard to imagine that readers living at societies and in different periods, and accordingly subjected to various degrees of ethical and moral restrictions, do easily identify, thus forming a narcissistic alliance with Dorian Gray, Lord Henry and even Basil Hallward who assert themselves throughout much of the narrative and express broad dissatisfaction in living the life prescribed by their society. Thus, the relation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to the reader is not unlike that of the "poisonous" book given by Lord Henry to Dorian Gray. Both books, instead of constituting their reader as

"subject" in opposition to themselves as "degraded objects," in fact give the objects a "subjective power," draining the "subject" of the certainty of "its own inviolability" (Humphreys 527).

The reader, however, is at times forced to withdraw his/ her empathy and take an objective stance toward the characters, thus is able to make more objective observations upon them. This is particularly true when s/he comes to Basil's disenchantment with Dorian, who has hitherto been an object of his idealization and identification; and Lord Henry's denouncement of "influence," which undermines his voyeuristic relationship with Dorian Gray and all his witty remarks reverberating throughout the novel. The reader will assume the role of an even more objective observer when s/he comes to Dorian Gray, especially when s/he witnesses the continuous corruption of the picture indicates not just the exchange of life and art, but also the corruption of the character's soul; and when the character himself could not help being burdened by his sense of guilt. Not only does he seeks forgetfulness in opium, he fancies that he has "altered" and moreover, has "spared" Hetty Merton, whom he compares to Sibyl Vane, thus implicitly admitting that he has wronged the latter as he was leading a corrupted life (210). He could not help frowning and feeling discomfort when Basil Hallward is brought up again in conversation (211).

To conclude the reader's role as both participant and observer in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, it is useful to take a look at its essential "ambiguity," on which Michael Patrick Gillespie's *The Picture of Dorian Gray: `What the World Thinks Me'* offers a detailed and insightful discussion. According to Gillespie, the novel, by presenting a structure in which multiple meanings are possible, changes the traditionally passive reader into a actively involved figure, and allowing him or her to decide how to incorporate independent ideas in the narrative into an interpretation that permits different, sometimes even contradictory perspectives, to coexist (14). First, the novel's

title "The Picture of Dorian Gray," with its definitive article "the," does not so much define clear interpretive boundaries; rather, the word "picture" connotes an "imaginative re-creation" of the individual who served as its model, and conveys a sense of "far more subjectivity" and "far less stability" than the reader might initially have assumed (35). Besides, though the writer makes no attempt to present the preface, which offers the reader "a page and a half of aphoristic phrases arranged in no apparent order and loosely connected to one another," as a guide for reading his novel, its very makeup challenges conventional assumptions about reading and might possibly influence the reader's impressions of the rest of the novel (14). In addition, the novel's narrative continues to alternate between an "orthodox fictional structure" and "experimental stylistic digressions," which both reinforce conventional expectations and raise possibilities for a range of new interpretive responses (15). In attempt to decipher the enigmas and entanglements of the novel and to arrive at his or her own interpretation, the reader's active participation and involvement on the one hand, and relatively detached judgement and observation on the other are simultaneously involved.

CHAPTER THREE

THE STUTTERER AND HIS TEMPLE:

THE TEMPLE OF THE GOLDEN PAVILION

Nancy Wilson Ross, in her introduction to *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, suggests several possible ways in which the novel could be interpreted: as the revolt of the young Japanese against the forms and disciplines of the Zen Buddhist way of life; an expression of post-war social revolt, even nihilism, on the part of young Japanese, following in the wake of the defeat and the Occupation; as a detailed, dramatic study of personal pathology (vii-viii). These interpretations, after all, are not mutually exclusive; for a psycho-social study of narcissism, it is even useful to integrate the social and historical background of the novel with the psychological dilemma of the protagonist.

Japan: Before and After World War II

During the Meji Restoration of 1868, Japan ended her three-hundred-year isolation under the feudal Tokugawa shogunate, set up a central government and opened her door to the West. The army was remodeled and the navy reorganized, a new constitution was promulgated after research in Europe and the United States

(Morton 150-3), and an aggressive foreign policy was also launched. Under the strong, autocratic rule of the ten'no (emperor) system (Nemoto 231) and its emphasis on the "combination of ancient patriotism and modern, scientific knowledge" (Morton 150), Japan not only became a modern nation but also emerged as a world power. During the reigns of the Meiji (1912-1867), Taisho (1912-1926), and Showa (1926-1945) emperors, the concept of kokutai (the national polity), or the "sacred nature of the Japanese nation" placed great emphasis on the emperor's divinity as a descendant of the Sun Goddess, and on the nobility of the Japanese people as sekishi (children) of the emperor God (Nemoto 231).

After the defeat of Japan in World War II, the Japanese emperor was retained in his position a "symbol of the nation's unity" and as the "keystone of the social arch which would preserve the country from chaos and disintegration" (Morton 205). Nevertheless, his public renunciation of claims to divinity changed his divine figure of authority into a mere human function of the state. Moreover, the American occupation also involved the first invasion of the soil the proud Japanese people had been taught to consider sacred (Morton 203). Therefore, in spite of the miraculous economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s, fostered and encouraged by the occupation authorities, the local government and private enterprise (Morton 207) which allowed the country by 1970 to attain a position strong and stable enough to emerge again as a world power (Morton 211), there was, quite apart from wide-ranging social problems and immense psychological traumas brought about by the war, a haunting sense of disillusionment, meaninglessness and isolation in what is considered as the "wasteland" of the post-war Japan (Napier 9).

Mishima: His Life and Philosophy

Mishima was born Kimitake Hiraoka in Tokyo, where his father worked as a senior government official. His paternal grandmother Natsu was obsessively protective of him. On his fiftieth day of life, she took him away from his mother, moved him into her darkened sickroom downstairs, and did not allow him to live with the rest of the family on the upper level of their home until he reached the age of twelve (Nathan 5, see also Draper 2413). Given Natsu Nagai's background as a descendant from an illustrious samurai family, but whose fits of hysteria made her marry the peasant Jotaro Hiraoka who later resigned from civil service and went heavily into debt as an entrepreneur (Nathan 4-5), her overprotection of the young Mishima is interpreted as a desire for her first grandson to share the burden of her "physical pain" and her "humiliation," as well as a desire to "instil in him the values she believed were his birthright, not as a lowly Hiraoka but a noble Nagai," and thereby to "live on in him" (Nathan 8). Even as a child, Mishima felt compelled to keep peace between his grandmother and his mother, to defer to the former and to conceal his anxiety from the latter, thus at an enormous emotional cost to himself (Nathan 12). Having returned to his family as an adolescent, Mishima, though loved by his mother, found himself the principal object of his father's severity, who wanted to undo his son's "girlishness" and "bookishness" which he considered to be the effects of his life with his grandmother (Nathan 23).

Still a child, Mishima was morbidly fascinated by pictures of knights dead in battle and samurai warriors committing ritual suicide, particularly Guido Reni's painting of the martyrdom of St. Sebastian (Wakeman 1001). As a student, he immersed himself in Japanese and western classics, as well as the works of European authors like Jean Racine, Proust, William Butler Yeats and Oscar Wilde, thus gaining exposure to ideas such as the idealization of physical beauty in Greek writings, sadism

and Satanism expressed in the works by Baudelaire and Yeats. However, it was the Japanese Romantic School (Nihon Roman-ha) that has been considered to exert the most profound influence on his life and career. The Nihon Roman-ha movement, emerging in the mid-1930s simultaneously with the rise of fascism and borrowing some of its central ideas from German Romanticism, considered Japan to be a nation inhabited by a "superior race and culture," and for which the "divine Emperor" was the "uniting force" (Nemoto 238). For Nihon Roman-ha writers, the "ideal death" meant "dying young, at the height of one's beauty, for the emperor" (Nemoto 238), an expectation of self-destruction which led them to a desire for the destruction of the whole world (Nemoto 238).

Given his early training, the onset of the World War II heightened the writer's fantasies of "Beauty, Death and Destiny" (Nathan 53), while the end of the war was probably a "blow" to him, bringing him the "existential horror of feeling bereft of identity and deprived of destiny" (Nathan 59), and making him feel that he was living a "leftover life" (Masao 174). Moreover, even his success as a writer, which won him fame and wealth, could not assuage his growing distress over the westernization and arid materialism of post-war Japan. Thus, like many people of his generation, he strongly believed that Emperor Hirohito's denial of divinity under pressure from the Allied Powers had led to the "loss of the Japanese soul" and as a consequence, the "moral degradation" and "social chaos" in the country (Nemoto 233). After a depressing visit to New York in 1957, he further developed a philosophy called "active nihilism," an element of which is the "idealism of suicide" as the "ultimate existentialist gesture" (Wakeman 1002).

Therefore, while the writer had nothing to offer as a "political" program (Masao 176), he was keen on reviving the tradition of "bushido," participated in a number of post-war demonstrations against the Japan-United States Mutual Security Pact, and

dreamt of an imminent revolution in which he himself would be ready to "fight with his own ancient sword in his hand and his hand-groomed corps of handsome young swordsmen at his side" (Masao 175-6). In 1967 he formed the "Shield Society" (Tate no kai), a private army dedicated to the overthrow of the American-imposed constitution and subsequently, the restoration of the prestige of the nation and the Emperor to his former position of pre-eminence. Receiving only laughters and jeers in response, however, he became aware that his values were not shared by the majority of his countrymen. In affirmation of his personal convictions, he committed "seppuku," which, in the samurai ethos, serves as a "respected form of protest" or as a "way of preserving personal honour in an otherwise dishonourable situation" (Draper 2414).

Mishima and Narcissism

Many biographers and critics have suggested that Mishima's "extreme isolation as a child" has inhibited him from forming social relationships as an adult, and some of them even claim that his formative early years have led to the "homoerotic and nihilistic tendencies" in his writings (Draper 2413). What these critics have not dealt with is the issue of narcissism: for instance, the child Mishima was not only "isolated" from his parents; he was probably treated narcissistically by his grandmother who regarded him as an extension of herself. Such childhood factors, together with the writer's education and the historical background in which he lived, had combined and produced the writer and his unique temperaments. Like the artist of Oscar Wilde, Mishima is estranged from what he considers as the irreconciliable reality. Like Wilde, he posits the attainment of absolute beauty as his life-long goal. Whereas Wilde idealizes art, the objects of idealization for Mishima is the "divine" Emperor and an early, "glorious," and therefore "beautiful" death for him.

Mishima sets *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* against World War II and its immediate aftermath. Associated with this historical background are various social and economic problems such as the prevalence of black markets, food shortages, and above all, the corruption of Buddhist priesthood: the preoccupation with wealth by various famous priests at the point of their death (Mishima 28), the priests' visit to the brothels when they were young (Mishima 230), the speaker's own witness of the erotic adventure of his superior with the geisha. Thus, the author portrayed a world utterly devoid of beauty, what was familiar to himself and on which he expressed dissatisfaction. However, the obvious historical background and the strong religious overtone of the novel should not lead the reader to overlook its equally strong psychological elements.

Mizoguchi and The Golden Temple

Though not much is said about Mizoguchi as a young child, it is clear the empathy he receives from his parents, if any, is meagre. First, as there is no suitable middle school near the temple of Cape Nariu, he leaves his parents' house and is sent to his uncle's home where he attends the East Maizuru Middle School (4). He does not say much about his father, except that it is he who first mentions the Golden Temple to the speaker, and that he feels the "slightest sorrow" over his death (31). His relationship with his mother is even worse. He could not bring himself to forgive her for her adultery with her relative and he confesses to the reader: "I have until now avoided writing about my mother. I do not particularly feel like touching on what relates to my mother" (54). Moreover, it becomes clear, as the story develops, that his mother has regarded him not so much as a loving son, but as the source of material

support: "The only thing for you now is to become the superior of the Golden Temple: That's all your mother will be living for now" (60).

The lack of empathy in the family is not supplied, but rather intensified in the school setting. Mizoguchi is haunted by a deep sense of inferiority due to his poor family, where his father was urged to join the clergy and became the priest of a temple on a remote cape (3), as well as his weak constitution which makes him perpetually defeated by his fellow classmates in sports (5). However, what inhibits him from the development of normal human relations and a healthy sense of the self, is his ugly and awkward appearance: he confesses that the "first real problem" he faces in his life is that of beauty, from which he is "estranged" (21); and his bad stutter:

> My stuttering, I need hardly say, placed an obstacle between me and the outside world. It is the first sound that I have trouble in uttering. This first sound is like a key to the door that separates my inner world from the world outside, and I have never known that key to turn smoothly in its lock. Most people, thanks to their easy command of words, can keep this door between the inner world and the outer world wide open, so that the air passes freely between the two; but for me this has been quite impossible. Thick rust has gathered on the key. (5)

His stuttering makes him an object of laughers and jeers by his classmates, as well as his own mother: "You fool! ... If they start taking stutterers like you into the Army, Japan is really finished!" (60)

Phil Mollon states that harmonious parental relation, more particularly, the primal scene, is crucial to identity formation. Curiously, Jacob A. Arlow, in his essay "Pyromania and the Primal Scene: A Psychoanalytic Comment on the Work of Yukio Mishima," also associates narcissism with the primal scene, but in an opposite direction. Quoting from Freud, Arlow sees parental intercourse as "traumatic," due to the evocation of overwhelming "sexual excitement" which is transformed into

"anxiety, and the child's misinterpretation of the act of love as a "sadomasochistic interaction" (26), the common and prominent response of which is a sense of "narcissistic mortification" and an "all-pervasive feeling of oedipal defeat" (28). The disappointed child feels "betrayed" and despairs of ever finding true love and happiness; more specifically, the little boy often ascribes his role as an observer rather than as a participant in the primal scene to his "phallic inferiority," and in reaction to this sense of "phallic humiliation," he might entertain "grandiose, phallic, narcissistic aspirations of an exhibitionistic nature" and might want to degrade his love-objects (28). Arlow also lays emphasis on the phenomenon of "narcissist rage": although most of the child's hostility may be directed against the parent of the same sex, both parents are in fact held accountable, giving rise to the child's wish to wreak vengeance on both in the form of "destructive fantasies that often take on an oral character" (28).

Studying *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, Arlow thus traces Mizoguchi's narcissistic tendencies, his act of arson and self-destruction to his witness, as a young child, of the sexual intercourse between his mother and his uncle. More particularly, Arlow observes his narcissistic rage, his impulse to punish his mother that has become the center of his life. As in many parts of the novel, the temple becomes identified with the woman and her breasts, this impulse of punishment assumes the form of wishing to destroy the Golden Pavilion (28). Once he starts making definite preparations to set fire to the temple, he feels liberated.

It is, after all, possible to balance Arlow's hypothesis with that of Phil Mollon. As discussed in Chapter One, Mollon locates the foundation of identity in the primal fantasies, which bring in the masculine force that acts as the differentiating principle defining limits and order (116), and which correspond to both the origins and the endings of an individual's existence, thus functioning as limits to narcissistic aspirations (113). According to Mollon, the mother's attempt to do without the father,

manifested typically in a dismissal of the primal scene, stops the child from entering into the triadic relationship with his/ her parents, and constitutes the second stage in the narcissistic development (111). The contradictory views of Arlow and Mollon not only make the primal scene in the novel ambiguous but also add to it a new significance. Though primal fantasies are crucial in identity formation, Mizoguchi does not witness the sexual intercourse between his parents as defined by Mollon, but between his mother and her relative. Moreover, the sexual relation of Mizoguchi's mother with her relative, but not her husband, could been regarded as her symbolic act of doing away with the latter. The sense of lineage and self-knowledge normally derived from primal fantasies are therefore undermined. In this light, Mizoguchi's narcissistic tendencies could be seen as a result of the lack of communication in his dyadic relation with his mother, as well as his failure in entering the triadic relation with his parents.

According to Kohut, one way for the narcissist to compensate for the lack of maternal care is by exercising dominance over others and extracting approval from them. In Mishima's novel, Mizoguchi's grandiose self is betrayed by his fantasies of death: he consoles himself with the "knowledge" that he is to "stand waiting in a dark world with both hands stretched out" to receive the souls of those haughty beautiful young men who die on the battlefield (8); his dreams of power: he imagines a world in which he would wield authority as a "stuttering, taciturn tyrant," wreck punishment on his teachers and schoolmates who daily torment him, while his retainers would "hang on every expression" that passed over his face, living "both day and night in fear and trembling of him" (6); and above all, his dreams as an artist, who is "endowed with the clearest vision - a veritable sovereign of the inner world" (6). Yet he confesses that all his dreams never went beyond the stage of being dreams, that he does not have the "slightest feeling of wanting to accomplish something" by actually putting his hands to it (9).

As Kohut also emphasizes the "idealizing self" of the patients, and Kernberg suggests how the child defends himself/ herself against his/ her aggression environment by merging ideal self and object images with actual self images, Mizoguchi yearns after beauty and perfection, and treats the Golden Temple as an "idealized self-object." His obsession has occurred ever since he learns of the temple:

> Though occasionally I saw the real Golden Temple in photographs or in textbooks, it was the image of the Golden Temple as Father had described it to me that dominated my heart. Father had never told me that the real Golden Temple was shining in gold, or anything of the sort; yet, according to Father, there was nothing on this earth so beautiful as the Golden Temple. Moreover, the very characters with which the name of the temple was written and the very sound of the word imparted some fabulous quality to the Golden Temple that was engraved on my heart. (4)

Whenever he sees a beautiful face, he thinks of it in terms of the temple (22). Though somehow disappointed by the real picture of the Golden Temple (24-5), he yet manages to recreate and sustain its ideal image in his mind, for instance, by resorting to its reflection in the pond, which seems more beautiful than the real building (24); by arguing that the real temple has "defiled" him and had merely adopted some disguise to hide its true beauty (25); by looking at the skilfully executed model of the Golden Temple, and dreams of the "small, but perfect" Golden Temple which is even smaller than the model, and of the Golden Temple which is infinitely greater than the real building, even enveloping world (25); by contending that the temple is more beautiful when absent:

> After my return to Yasuoka, the Golden Temple, which had disappointed me so greatly at first sight, began to revivify its beauty within me day after day, until in the end it became a more beautiful Golden Temple than it had been before I

> saw it. I could not say wherein this beauty lay. It seemed that what had been nurtured in my dreams had become real and could now, in turn, serve as an impulse for further dreams (29).

Kernberg and Kohut have noticed the lack of empathy of their patients. It is not mere coincidence that Morishige also remarks that the "inchoate merging of dream with reality" in the novel is accompanied by the speaker's "growing sense of being divorced from his own emotions" (68): not only does he feel no sorrow at his father's death, he finds that sadness is completely unrelated to a specific event or motive (68): "When I am sad, sorrow attacks me suddenly and without reason: it is connected with no particular event and with no motive" (Mishima 40). In addition, life is seen not in terms of his human, inner relationship to it, but in the dreams and sensations of exaggerated powers and external occurrences (Morishige 68, see Mishima 47-8)

The collapse of the boundaries among actual self, ideal self and object images and the merger with an idealized self-object does, for a time, enable the speaker to maintain a state of self-sufficiency and psychological well-being. In particular, the desertion of the temple during war makes it far removed from the public: "The number of visitors decreased drastically and the Golden Temple seemed to be enjoying this loneliness, this silence" (36). Moreover, before the war ends, the temple is threatened by the imminence of death which in turn beautifies its actual picture. Thus the war makes possible the merger between the imagined vision of the temple and its actual picture:

> This beautiful building was before long going to be turned into ashes, I thought. As a result, my image of the Golden Temple gradually came to be superimposed on the real temple itself in all its details, just as the copy that one has made through a piece of drawing-silk comes to be superimposed on the original painting: the roof in my image was superimposed on the real roof, the

> Sosei on the Sosei that extended over the pond, the railings and the windows of the Kukyocho on those railings and windows. The Golden Temple was no longer an immovable structure. It had, so to speak, been transformed into a symbol of the real world's evanescence. Owing to this process of thought, the real temple had now become no less beautiful than that of my mental image (45).

It also draws an intimate tie between Mizoguchi and the temple, with his thought that both are lonely and estranged, and that both will be destroyed in the war:

> It was a period during which I had seemed to pull the temple down to my own level and, believing this, was able to love it without the slightest sense of fear. ... I was encouraged by the fact the Golden Temple and I shared a common danger in this world. In this danger I found an intermediary that could connect me with beauty. I felt that a bridge had been built between myself and the thing that until then had seemed to deny me, to keep me at a distance (46).

Thus Mizoguchi is, for a time, able to enter temporarily into the world of friendship and community. Tsurukawa, being affluently provided for by his family (38), should have naturally aroused his jealousy. Nevertheless he is able to accept his wholeness and moreover, aligns himself with him: "Like the young man's wrinkled shirt, my life was wrinkled. But, wrinkled as it was, how white his shirt shone in the sunlight! Perhaps I too?" (40) His most satisfactory erotic experience, though voyeuristic, also occurs during this period, as he witnesses the woman at Nansen Temple giving milk to the soldier: "Tsurukawa and I gazed tensely at the scene ... Because we were staring so hard, we did not have time to notice that the man and woman had gone out of the room, leaving nothing but the great red carpet" (52).

The war, however, ends with the temple still standing. Mizoguchi thus seizes what he regards as a second chance, by staying at the temple during the typhoon,

praying in desperation for the temple to be torn down by the wind and himself to die with it:

> "The wind grew stronger and stronger until it became a great gale. Now it seemed to be a sort of omen that I was to be destroyed together with the Golden Temple. My heart was within that temple and at the same time it rested on that wind." (132)

The temple, having survived both traumas, becomes to the Japanese a "transcendent reminder of imperishability" (Duus 155). Yet for Mizoguchi, this sense of eternity is both "remote" and "inhuman." It transcends his own image, rejects all meaning (Duus 155), and puts him in hopeless isolation:

> "The bond between the Golden Temple and myself has been cut," I thought. "Now my vision that the Golden Temple and I were living in the same world has broken down. Now I shall return to my previous condition, but it will be even more hopeless than before. A condition in which I exist on one side and beauty on the other. A condition that will never improve so long as this world endures." (64)

After Mizoguchi has entered the university, he meets his clubfooted schoolmate, Kashiwagi, who believes that their being handicapped have placed them in an antagonistic relationship to the rest of the world. Yet, Kashiwagi is contented with what he regards as the meaninglessness of life, in which even "love" is illusory and "impossible " (102), and if he has any ambition, it is to live his life fully:

> "Just to exist was more than enough to satisfy me. In the first place, doesn't uneasiness about one's existence spring precisely from a sort of luxurious dissatisfaction at the thought that one may not be living fully?" (100)

Therefore, he does not only accept club feet, but even employs them as a weapon to

manipulate people into providing himself with as much comfort as possible. The way he urges Mizoguchi to experience life selfishly and nihilistically is not entirely unlike what Lord Henry tells Dorian Gray: "The very best thing for you might be to do exactly what I did" (94). Mizoguchi, however, is continuously obsessed with his own ugliness after the war. He associates every woman he meets with Uiko, his beautiful neighbour who is the object of his sex fantasy and from whom he suffers narcissistic injury, and thus a symbol of rejection and humiliation.

While Mizoguchi feels threatened by the Golden Temple, he is still compelled to use it as his idealized self-object and finds refuge and comfort. When Kashiwagi bids him follow the girl to her house, he escapes by returning to the temple: "Not until the streetcar started in the direction of the Golden Temple could I breathe freely" (110). Thus, even when he attempts to reach out toward life through sexual experience with the girl ordered by Kashiwagi to be his lover, the engulfing image of the Golden Temple makes him impotent:

> Finally I slipped my hand up the girl's skirt.
>
> Then the Golden Temple appeared before me.
>
> ... It was this structure that now came and stood between me and the life at which I was aiming. ... How could I possibly stretch out my hands towards life when I was being thus enwrapped in beauty? (124)

Nevertheless, it is not long before he is forced to return to reality, and becomes more estranged than ever:

> ... It was only for a short time that I was completely embraced by this vision of the Golden Temple. When I returned to myself, the temple was already hidden. It was merely a building that still stood far to the northeast in Kinugasa and that I could not possibly see from here. The moment of illusion, in which I had

imagined myself being accepted and embraced by the Golden Temple, had passed. (124-6)

Not only does the temple prove fatal by inhibiting the speaker from life, it also makes his return to reality particularly painful. Earlier, his mother's infidelity, Uiko's betrayal of her lover, Kashiwagi's cruelty, the strange fate of the woman who teaches flower arrangement, the hypocrisy of the lie of his superior have all taught him that reality is treacherous and changeable; his home visit confirms the absence of beauty and meaning in his life (Chapter Eight). This sense of life's meaninglessness is augmented by the death of Tsurukawa. For Mizoguchi, Tsurukawa has been acting like an empathic listener and even a possible "mirror," who could have compensated for the lack of empathy in his childhood, and who could therefore have saved him from his narcissistic hell:

> There was something superbly accurate about the way in which he had been able to translate each of my dark feelings into bright feelings. Sometimes I had suspected that Tsurukawa had actually experienced my own feelings, just because his brightness corresponded so accurately to my darkness, because the contrast between our feelings was so perfect! (128)

Yet Tsuruwaka, whose character has seemed to be cheerful and whole, has been under intense suffering, has confided in Kashiwagi, to whom he has shown apparent disapproval, and moreover, has possibly died by committing suicide instead of by an accident. When Father Zenkai, who impresses the speaker with his gentleness and from whom the speaker seeks understanding, ultimately fails to understand him: "There's no need to see into you. One can see everything on your face" (247), Mizoguchi becomes resolute in setting fire to the temple (247).

The speaker, whose continuous obsession with beauty becomes unbearable, ultimately decides to set fire to the temple and to perish in the blaze himself, thus

achieving a perpetual union with it and fulfilling what the war and the typhoon have failed him. In the light of narcissism, there is no doubt that the arson has other levels of significance as well. It signifies his narcissistic rage, as a consequence of failure in maintaining his grandiosity, and his projection of his rage onto the temple: "Beauty, beautiful things," he tells Kashiwagi, "those are now my most deadly enemies" (217). What then follows is that by burning the temple, he could arouse public attention and thus re-assert his grandiosity:

> When the Golden Temple has been burned down - yes, when the Golden Temple has been burned, the world of these fellows will be transformed, the golden rule of their lives will be turned upside own, their train timetables will be thrown into utter confusion, their laws will be without effect. It made me happy to think that these people were completely unaware that the young man who sat there next to them, warming his hands over the brazier with an unconcerned look, was a prospective criminal. (197)

According to Morishige, Mizoguchi's engagement in fantasy inhibits himself from being "inspired by the objective beauty of the temple" and to "recognize its value as art which embodies the humanistic ideals of a cultural past" (74). It also leads him to become "distrustful" of his own power to lead "a life of positive action" (84). Consequently, he has to use a "fairy-tale," the ancient work of "Tsukumogami-ki," to justify his destruction of the Temple and thus to escape from his own frustrations and inadequacies and to lead his new life (82, see Mishima 195-6).

Mizoguchi nevertheless escapes at the last moment from the conflagration, after the little golden room in which he hoped to die refuses to open the door to his insane pounding. Critics like Susan J. Napier and Arthur G. Kimball offer more positive interpretations of Mizoguchi's action. Napier defines Mizoguchi as a "romantic hero" (106) who is disappointed by the world of shattered dreams and traditions in the post-

war Japan and who yearns to return to the world of traditional beauty for which the temple serve as a symbol. By destroying the temple in actuality, he thus retains the temple within his own mind, and restores it to its original beauty (118). Arthur, whose argument partly coincides with mine, regards the temple as a "wish-fulfilment image of the beauty" that does not belong to Mizoguchi and a "despised symbol of the self-hatred" that he projects (84), and further extends it to encompass "all that frustrates and confuses, of all that he loves and hates, of all that demands expression but is locked up within" (85). The destruction of the temple is therefore both destructive and creative: it is destructive since is the speaker's attempt to remove the "inhibiting barriers" with stifle him (85); it is creative since it also represents the psyche's struggle to "free itself and establish a wholesome contact with the world he fears, yet needs" (85).

While the views offered by Napier and Kimball might be considered dubious since, to a certain extent, they seem to justify the speaker's crime, they offer insights to the discussion on Mizoguchi's narcissism, and even make possible an alternative interpretation of his violent action. More specifically, Napier's view that Mizoguchi could only live in the "real world" with its disappointing reality by "internalizing" the object of his desire and "possessing" it in his mind (113) bear particular correspondence to Kohutian view on narcissism. As the temple has hitherto functioned as the idealized self-object, the destruction and subsequent "possession" of the temple is analogous to what Kohut calls "transmuting internalization," normally achieved with the help of caring and empathic caretakers, by which the mirroring functions of "archaic self-objects" are internalized and a firm self is developed. Mizoguchi, who receives little empathy from his parents as a young child, and virtually no understanding from his friends as a young adult, has to achieve this structure-building process all by himself, and succeeds in doing so. Though born as a stutterer and is deprived of eloquence of speech, he ultimately manages to break away from his

narcissistic hell and affirm himself through his body and action:

> It wouldn't be long now, I thought; I must just remain patient for a short while. The rusty key that opened the door between the outer world and my inner world would turn smoothly in its lock. My world would be ventilated as the breeze blew freely between it and the outer world. The well bucket would rise, swaying lightly in the wind and everything would open up before me in the form of a vast field and the secret room would be destroyed (147-8).

That probably explains why, after his decision to set fire to the temple, he experiences one of his most liberating experiences, which is his encounter with a gay quarters prostitute with whom he loses his virginity. This girl, he claims, has looked at him with a look one might give to "some fellow human being" (224). Consequently, his existence is affirmed: "I was being handled like a man who is part of a universal unit" (224). And as Kimball sees Mizoguchi's stuttering as an "apt symbol of bondage" and a physiological sign of his psychological distress (85-6), he no longer stutters in front of the prostitute: "After I had taken off my clothes, many more layers were taken off me - my stuttering was taken off and also my ugliness and my poverty" (228). Though Morishige considers the "optimism" that ends the novel "pathological" (83) and the sense of "renewed life" "illusory" (82), Mizoguchi does end his narration with the note of self-affirmation: "I felt like a man who settles down for a smoke after a job of work. I wanted to live" (262).

The Golden Temple and The Novel as a Japanese Painting

Like the portrait in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the Golden Temple in Mishima's novel serves as a vehicle of the narcissistic theme. As a national treasure and an emblem of beauty, it is the idealized self-object, or the alter-ego, to which the

speaker desires to merge and, at the same time, the object on which he projects his self-hatred and therefore an "enemy to be eliminated" (Kimball 84). Both a "wish-fulfilment image of beauty" and a "despised symbol of self-hatred" (Kimball 84), the temple thus encapsulates the central feature of the narcissistic character, that is, the oscillation between self-hatred and self-love, self-debasement and self-inflation. Moreover, as an idealized self-object of the speaker, it is at once the source of protection and of alienation: "Why does the Golden Temple try to protect me? Why does it try to separate me from life without my asking it?" (153).

Nancy Wilson Ross, in her introduction to *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, associates the novel with a Japanese painting, particularly on the basis of its slow, unwinding structure:

> The story unwinds as a slowly moving spiral in which figures originally glimpsed from a distance suddenly, with the passing of time, appear in the immediate foreground. Ghosts of the past also become, momentarily, living realities. (xiii)

Uiko is one of those "ghosts" which continue to haunt Mizoguchi. Moreover, the woman, whom he has seen from a distance at her intimate tea ceremony with her soldier-lover, impinges on his consciousness again as her story is told by his casual "date," and later, even appears in front of him as Kashiwagi's rejected mistress. The episode between the speaker and the woman culminates in an uprush of recollection in the latter and her offering herself to him, which is followed by the intervention of the image of the Golden Temple, before the entire scene fades away (153). According to Ross, the fade-out of the scene and its mistiness resemble that of a Japanese painting:

> This pervasive fog, in which the hero himself is living, reminds one of a Japanese painting, those subtle masterpieces created with sumi ink on silk which show a world tantalizingly half-revealed, half-obscured; misty

> landscapes in which trees, mountains, people - all of seemingly equal significance - are presented in a great living emptiness. (xiv)

Ross further associates this feature to Zen Buddhism, which defines "illusion and evanescence" as the only "definable qualities of human existence" (xvi). In line with the current discussion on narcissism, the superimpositions, for instance, the ghost of Uiko, rather suggests the narcissistic injury suffered by the protagonist and its continuous traumatic effects on him. The "half-obscured" and "half-revealed" features signifies his failure to function in the real world. It reminds us of Mizoguchi's stuttering and therefore his inability to "syncronize his verbal responses to the realities about him," which results in reality taking on an "unreal character, going out of focus, and losing meaning" (Dana 93). It also reminds us of Kernberg's theory on narcissism, his emphasis on the way narcissistic patients reduce their fellow human beings into shadows that barely exist. The "misty" quality of the novel thus allows the reader to follow through the cavernous and labyrinthine world of the protagonist.

Narcissism and the Reader

Marion Boyle makes some insightful comments on the dual role performed by Mizoguchi, both as protagonist and as narrator, in the novel. Mizoguchi the protagonist holds himself aloof, lives mainly in his internal world, scorns close relation with his fellows, and even prides in not being understood (Boyle 1556). Mizoguchi the narrator, who tells his story in retrospect, shows immense differences. He displays no desire for death, which is expressed by the protagonist from time to time, and desires to be understood (Boyle 1556), repeatedly making comments such as: "I hope that people will recognize how carefully I went about everything," "I hope that I am making myself understood." Boyle further notices that by the very end of the novel, the

protagonist, like the narrator, yearns to be understood: "The desire to be understood by others had so far never occurred to me, but now I wished that Father Zenkai alone would understand me." Thus the character "catches up" with the narrator, the major differences between the protagonist and the narrator are "bridged," and the story is finished (1556-7). For Boyle, that implies the "character change" in the protagonist which is brought about by the burning of the temple, causing him to "want to live and to be understood" (1557). It becomes obvious how the essential duality of the novel further the understanding of the balance of empathy and detachment required of both the reader and the analyst. As the protagonist, the narcissistic Mizoguchi shuns off any possible sympathy on the reader's part, who consequently takes a more objective stance from the narrative for careful observation; as the narrator, he requests much empathy from the reader, who responds actively to his need, relives his pathos, and involves voyeuristically in the co-creation of his story.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE POET AND HIS GARDEN:

YING'ER

Gu Cheng [顧城] (1958-93) has emerged as one of the most controversial writers of China since the tragic death of him and his wife in October 1993. He has been approved by some critics as a highly talented poet (Yan 241), while criticized by others as a mediocre one (Zhou 108). For his wife, he is among the few who have been blessed and endowed by God the ability to communicate with heaven (Xie 87); for others, he was selfish, hypocritical, and even a lunatic (Luo, Ding, Zhou). His novel, *Ying'er* [英兒], is not less controversial. Written in Berlin, it was the last major work and the only extended prose work of the writer and of his wife who is claimed as the co-author under the pen name Lei Mi [雷米]. Ever since its publication in November 1993, *Ying'er* has continued to baffle ordinary readers and critics alike, and its incoherence, incompleteness and fragmentary structure have led critics to conclude that the writer is a madman. For instance, the translator Li Xia, in his foreword to the English version of *Ying'er*, claims that the disjointed and unintelligible parts of the book could only reflect the writer's "irrational state of mind" (Gu iv). Shi Ming, in "How Gu Cheng the poet wrote his novel," criticizes Gu Cheng for displaying in his work none of the "calmness" and "rationality" required of the standard Chinese novelist

(151). However, like the works discussed in the previous chapters, *Ying'er* could after all be seen as a product of a particular era in modern Chinese history.

The Cultural Revolution, Post-Mao Era, and "Obscure" Poetry

The collectivist tradition of the Chinese culture is well reflected in Confucianism, one of the major schools of thought in China over two thousand years. Despite the rich variety of metaphysical views as well as conceptions of human nature in different forms of Confucian thought that continue to evolve up to the present (Honderich 151), its major emphases have been "Ren" [仁] (humanity, goodness, benevolence), generalized as one's sensitivity to the well-being of all things; "Li" [禮] (rites, rituals, propriety), all norms governing ceremonious behaviour and one's responsibilities by virtue of one's social position; "Yi" [義] (rightness, duty, fittingness), the proper weighing of relevant considerations in any context of action; and above all, the gradual cultivation of the self to embody these attributes, in order to achieve a harmonious social and political order (Honderich 149-50). Due to its practical orientation, Confucianism has exerted dominant and encompassing influence on the life of Chinese, not merely rulers and nobles during the age of empires, but also intellectuals and ordinary people up to the present century. Although Confucianism no longer plays the dominant role in contemporary Chinese political life and institutions it once did in past centuries, Confucian classics are still studied and its virtues somehow remain the cornerstone of ethics.

After the People's Republic of China was set up in 1949, many Confucian-based traditions were put aside. Nevertheless, the collectivist orientation of the society did not change. The basic policy of the Communist government was to transform China into a socialist society. Though the family system was deemphasized, youths were

directed to look to the party and the state for leadership and security. Intellectuals were subjected to a program of thought reform aimed at eradicating anti-Communist ideas. Private industry was brought under joint state-private ownership and state control. During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Mao and his supporters even attempted to eradicate the remains of so-called bourgeois ideas and customs and to recapture the revolutionary zeal of early Chinese communism. It was only after the end of the Cultural Revolution, when Hua Guofeng was elected as the premier and Deng Xiaoping as the deputy premier, that moderate policies were adopted.

To a large extent, the literary trends of China have not only followed the collectivist orientation of its society, but have also been conditioned by various social and political factors. In the first half of the 20th Century, Chinese writers used literature mainly as a mirror to reflect the seamy side of life and as a weapon to combat the evils of society. One good example is the famous May Fourth writer, Lu Xun [鲁迅] (1881-1936). The result was therefore a "conscientious but technically unadventuresome social realism" (Kinkley 2). Similarly, Chinese literature of the 1950s had to conform to the literary policies codified by Mao Zedong in his "Yan'an Talks," which left readers with little other than "rosy socialist realist formulas" (Kinkley 2). The Maoist literary scene "thawed" somewhat during the Hundred Flowers Movement of 1957, and the new post-Mao literary climate after the death of Mao Zedong and the arrest of the Gang of Four welcomed back exiled intellectuals, and allowed not only the exposure of the darker sides of socialist society, but even popular, romantic, and even a few modernist works (Kinkley 2, 6). After the Sino-American normalization of relations in 1978, private literary journals appeared, which disclosed serious social and economic problems, such as poverty, ideological disillusionment, and lying by the press (Kinkley 2, 8). Nevertheless, literary freedom was never realized completely, and the "power of the state to disrupt literary creativity

through patronage and other benign forms of intervention" can be observed, for instance, in its "exhortations to produce a literature with heroes capable of realizing the Four Modernizations" and its "official literary competitions" (Kinkley 9). Moreover, writers had largely written "on behalf of the whole people," but not of "individuals presumed to have inalienable rights." Consequently, the "conscience" of an artist was, using Mao's rhetoric, "with the masses," rather than "deep in the artist's soul" (Kinkley 4). Thus Kinkley, writing in 1985 the introduction to his book *After Mao: Chinese Literature and Society 1978-1981*, observes that Chinese literature has developed within an "intellectual hothouse, if not a desert" at least for the previous few decades (4).

The post-Mao literary scene, however, did exhibit a certain "multiplicity." In particular, the relatively liberal environment of China after 1978 advocated more individualistic and radical ideas, such as the "importance of one's private mental world," and "transcendental social values beyond materialist collectivism" (Kinkley 8). The young poets, their minds liberated, became increasingly dissatisfied with old poetic traditions established by the older generations, and were keen on setting up new modes of writing for themselves (Li 429). A new kind of poetry emerged, which Sun Shaozhen, in his essay 'New Aesthetic Principles Are Rising" (1981), regards as far from the usual kind of literary succession, since these poets were "scornful of being clarions for the age," but instead emphasized the "expressions of the self," and produced "poetry that challenge usual expectations and familiar reading habits" (Tay 146-7). Due to the symbolic subtlety, absence of didacticism, and occasional emphasis on imagistic perspicuity of these writing (Tay 136), they have been praised by some as "realization of new aesthetic principles," yet at the same time dubbed by critics as "menglong shi" [obscure poetry 矇朧詩], and occasionally labelled as "guguai shi" [eccentric poetry古怪詩] (Tay 132). Moreover, due to the emphasis on the "self," even

though many of these poems were not really "drifting away from reality" or "indulging in purely individualistic expressions" (Tay 135), they were often deplored as "anti-socialist" deviations from the Four Modernizations program (Tay 132), and even condemned as causing "spiritual pollution" (Tay 147). Among the "obscure" or "menglong" poets, Gu Cheng is one of the most discussed and most controversial figures.

Gu Cheng: Genius, Lunatic, or Narcissus?

As a young child, Gu Cheng already carried an introverted disposition which deprived him of normal social contact. He created a strange language, resembling that of a bird, for communication. For a time, he had to rely on his sister who acted like his interpreter and "translated" his words to his parents, and only abandoned this "language" later (Jiang 15). He was reluctant to go to the kindergarten, refused to play with other children, but instead indulged in his world of imagination and of enchantment by nature (Jiang 39-44). Being the youngest child and only son of the family, his relation with his mother was exceptionally close. When he was still a child, she allowed him to negotiate with her about not going to school (Jiang 20-34); after he had grown up as a mature adult, her behaviour continued to be "protective" and "indulgent" (Wang 5).

During the Cultural Revolution, the Gu family was exiled to a Shandong village, where they endured five years of poverty, loneliness and hardship (Wang 5, see also Jiang 65-70). Suffering from a lack of "empathy" in his social environment, Gu Cheng found solace in the contemplation of nature and its beauty, and started writing poems after his father (Wang 5, see also Jiang 65-85). After he returned to Beijing in 1974, he spent a long time in discovering the meaning of life, which was to be found in "poetry" (Jiang 106). The success of his first work, *Shengming huanxiangqu* [Imaginative song

of life生命幻想曲] affirmed him of his "mission," which was to build up a "garden of poetry" so that people will revive their belief in beauty and their hope in future (Jiang 109).

Like other "obscure poets," Gu Cheng emphasized the concept of "self" and "individuality" which had long been suppressed in traditional Chinese society and its literature:

> The old kind of poetry has always propagandized about a `non-individual' `I' of `self,' an `I' that is self-denying and self-destructive; an 'I' that is constantly reduced to a grain of sand, a road-paving pebble, a cogwheel, a steel screw. In short, never a person, a human being who can think, doubt, and have emotions and desires. ... In short, a robot, a robot `I' This kind of `I' may have a religious beauty of self-sacrifice, but, as an `I' who has eradicated his most concrete, individual being, he himself finally loses control and is destroyed. The new kind of `self' is born on this heap of ruins. (Tay 147)

He therefore defined the poet's job as the expression of the "self," and stressed the necessity for the self to search for the "real world," one that has been "neglected and forgotten" (Jiang 131-2). Due to his belief in the power of poetry, and also his worship of "pure" [chunjing 純淨] and "absolute" [chuncui 純粹] beauty (Jiang 152), he has been labelled by many critics as "idealist" (Jiang 152). In his opinion, man has the innate power to "feel" and "appreciate" beauty, and on the basis of this sensibility, to "imagine" himself as part of the natural world (Yan 87). Over and over again he expressed his contempt for city men and their utter lack of self-knowledge, as well as his wish to escape from modern city: "I believe that the city will disappear in my poems. What emerges finally is a piece of farmland" (Yan 237, see also Jiang 163). Therefore, his poems are essentially "anti-urban" (Yan 237), and, comparing language

to banknote which wear out in the circulation process, he carefully selected pure, "uncontaminated" words and sentences to delineate his childlike perspective (Yan 241).

Apart from nature, Gu Cheng was also enthralled by images of women presented in literature. In the Western tradition, he loved the young girls in the works of Auguste Renoir (1814-1919), Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875), and numerous fairy-tales (Gu, "Fushide, Hongloumeng, nu'erxing" 187, see also Gálik 282); in the indigenous tradition, it was mainly Cao Zueqin's *Hungloumeng* [*Dream of the Red Chamber*紅樓 夢] and its "Daguanyuan" [Grand View Garden 大觀園] full of young girls, especially the "Twelve Beauties of Jinling" [Jinling shier chai金陵十二釵]. Thus, when referring to Cao Zueqin he very often quoted the words of his "hero" and "admired model" Jia Baoyu, the protagonist in *Dream of the Red Chamber*: "Girls are made of water, men of mud. ... I feel clean and refreshed when I am with girls but find men dirty and stinking" (Gálik 282, see also DRC., Vol. 1, 26). As Baoyu's grandmother, in the presence of his mother, Lady Wang, remarked that Baoyu "was really meant to be born a girl ... " (DRC, Vol. 2, 653), Gu Cheng suffered from the fact that he was born a boy, or at least regarded it as a "mistake" (Gu, "Fushide, *Hungloumeng*, nu'erxing" 187, see also Gálik 282). He further associated the nature of young girls, or "Nu'erxing" [maidenhood女兒性] with "Foxing" [Buddhahood 佛性], on the basis of their "purity" and "harmony" (Gu, "Fushide, *Hungloumeng*, nu'erxing" 188), and defined them as the "true," "unchanging" and "eternal nature" of all beings (Gu, "Fushide, *Hungloumeng*, nu'erxing" 186, 190, see also Gálik 283).

Later, Gu Cheng attempted to realize his dream of "nature" on Waiheke Island of New Zealand. On the island, he shunned contact with other people, and later, even resigned from his job as a researcher in the Chinese Department of Auckland University, and became jobless and penniless. It was his wife who supported him

financially and, much against his wish, bridged him to the social world (Yan 238). He also attempted to realize his dream of "maidenhood," pinning all his hopes on the arrival of his lover, Ying'er, whom he wish would live with him and his wife on the island. When both women finally left him, each for a life of her own, he resorted to violence, first by wounding his wife, which turned out to be fatal, and then by committing suicide.

If the writer's family, particularly the indulgence of his mother, encouraged the formation of his narcissistic sentiment in the child, this was probably fuelled by social factors, such as the encouragement of individual thinking in China during the seventies. For Ding Guo, however, it was social recognition in particular that made Gu Cheng become an extreme individualist: he treated himself as "God," exploited and humiliated his wife, and had not really detached from a life of materialism and publicity as he fancied himself to have (172-3). Ding's view is agreed by the critic Chen Bingliang, who suggests that the poetic ability and international approval had led to the formation of his grandiose and exhibitionistic self, and he sought to maintain the image of gransiosity by wearing a hat, which he called the "hat of thinking" (111). Of course, his wife Xie Ye, by bolstering his grandiosity (Chen 111), was also one of those to blame for his narcissism.

For Gu Cheng, the ideal "self-object" was nature and its "pure" beauty, and it was through the identification with nature that he transcended the falsities of life. His appreciation of "imagination," "beauty" and "nature" and his devaluation of "social reality" in his poetic theory therefore produces a "dichotomy" which is not unlike Wilde's "art-nature dichotomy," so is his belief in the dichotomy of "femininity" and "masculinity." In the myth, Narcissus wants the pool, which for him is the whole universe, to stay still, and for his own reflection to last permanently (Chen 102). Gu Cheng might also have wanted time to stop so that he could remain in his world of

imagination undisturbed: as a child, he was reluctant to grow up; after he has matured, he continued to fancy himself as a child (Chen 108). In his poem "Jianli" [My simple history 簡歷], the persona says "I am a sad child/ And have not grown up"; and in "Woshe yige renxingde haizi" [I am a wilful child 我是一個任性的孩子]: "Perhaps/ I am the spoilt child of my mother/ I am wilful" (Chen 108). When his wife and lover disobeyed him, he was seized by "narcissistic rage"; in face of their departures and therefore the failure of setting up his ideal kingdom, he suffered from a "narcissistic injury" (Chen 116), which initiated his "self-destructive mechanism" and violent action (Chen 117).

It is Zhou Dou who, apart from labelling the writer "narcissistic," launches the fiercest attack against him. Making use of the four models of suicide in Durkheim Emile's *Suicide*, he classifies the suicide of Gu Cheng as "self-interested" (108). He also sees Gu Cheng as suffering from what Erich Fromm in *Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil* calls the "Syndrome of Decay" and equates him with Hitler, since they both exhibit the two dominant symptoms, that is, "pathological narcissism" and "reluctance to growing up/ yearn for a return to the womb" (111-2). Zhou carefully attributes Gu's violence and suicide to social and personal factors, and sees a significant relation between "psychological health" and "aesthetic appreciation" (109). His view is that a number of Chinese poets of the "Obscure tradition" are keen on the imitation of what they think is "Western Culture" and its "Modernism," but without learning and appreciating the roots and essence of Western civilization (109-110). As "Modern" literature, unlike that of the "Romantic" and "Classical" periods, very often expose the "darkest" and "ugliest" sides of human nature and sometimes make "genius" and "insanity" indistinguishable, writers who are driven by fashion to imitate and indulge in "Modernism" are, in return, easily moulded and transformed into its stereotypes (110).

To explore whether the poet in fact suffered from what Fromm calls "Syndrome of Decay" is beyond the scope of this thesis. For the rest of this chapter, I will instead explore the theme of narcissism on the basis of his work *Ying'er*. As a portrayal of the intricacies of Gu Cheng's life on the island and his relationship with his wife Lei and his lover Ying'er, and being overtly autobiographical with the use of real names for the characters, the novel no doubt proves beneficial to those interested in psychopathology as well as those who are curious about the life of Gu Cheng as a writer.

"Peach-blossom Springs" 桃花源

Many critics use the term "Taohuayuan" [Peach-blossom springs] to describe the Gu Cheng's idea of setting up his kingdom of "purity" on Waiheke Island. "Peach-blossom Springs" originates from the title of a prose fiction written by the Chinese poet Tao Yuanming [陶淵明], which tells the adventure of a fisherman, who comes across a peach grove that leads to a secluded village. Its inhabitants, ever since their forefathers, during the troubled times of the Qin Dynasty, sought refuge in the place with their families and neighbours, having been living in "absolute seclusion" (180). The writer emphasizes not only the absolute isolation of the village from the rest of the world, but also the harmony of its community: " ... the houses and homesteads all neatly arranged" (179), "As the cocks crowed, the dogs barked in return" (180). Tao Yuanming ends the story by describing the failed attempt, both by the fisherman and others, to rediscover the secluded village, thus carrying his subtle mourning for a paradise that no longer exist in his contemporary age.

When Gu Cheng the narrator first arrives on the island, he at once fantasizes it as a piece of land on which he was destined to set foot and build his ideal kingdom ever since he was a child: "I've been looking for a place like this for twenty years. I began when I left school at twelve." (210). The reader has a glimpse of the routine of his life,

as well as that of his wife and his lover. They raise chickens, take a walk, pick fruit, wash clothes, air the quilts. His wife gets up early on Thursday mornings to make spring rolls (73). After Ying'er has lived on the island for quite a while, Gu plans to build a new home for himself and the two women ("The House"). Nevertheless, we can only reconstruct the picture of their lives by picking bits of references hither and thither, since for most parts of the novel, the consciousness of the narrator is foregrounded, and is moreover intertwined with both the natural settings of the island and his love and sexual relation with Ying'er. Therefore, not only is the body of Ying'er described in terms of the natural world: "You alone moved up and down like the spring tides lashing at the shores." (39), but also his own desire: "My desire is like the saplings covering the hills, stretching endlessly, longing so strongly" (41). Similarly, his delirium after his sexual consummation with Ying'er is expressed in vital and organic images: "It was the sweetness of trees taking root in the deep soil; it was the beauty of branches swaying in the breeze. I can't find better words" (43).

However, it is not hard to notice how Gu Cheng's kingdom of purity in fact deviates from the essence of "Peach-blossom Springs," gross deviations that in turn highlight his narcissistic sentiments. While Tao stresses the seclusion of his imagined village, he is also at pains to emphasize its sameness, save its absence of war and conflicts, with the outside world: "All the inhabitants busied themselves with farmwork in the same manner as the people outside; so did their men and women attire themselves" (180), as well as the hospitality of its people, who are so eager to find out where the fisherman comes from, and to invite him to their homes and entertain him with chicken and wine (180). Gu Cheng the narrator in *Ying'er*, however, is essentially anti-social. "The Die-Hard Prisoner" tells his self-realization of the fact that he was "born not to belong to life," and even as a child: "I live in my room and I don't go into the street. I draw in my room and I don't look at the scenery outside. I speak my own

tongue and I don't understand other languages" (77). Later, he develops his contempt for other people: "I began to dislike them when I was seventeen. People are boring." (150), and reveals in "The House" his fantasy as an adolescent of building a castle:

> ... I only wished to have a house on the mountain with stone walls and a staircase of a hundred steps, far from the villages and towns and with no human shadows cast on my soil. I wanted to build up my walls stone by stone and by battlements, fort and dark winding underground tunnels. And from every tiny embrasure, I would be able to see the forest, the river, the ferries and the crowds on market day down below. No one would be able to enter this castle. (153)

His success in building a castle on Waiheke Island thus reinforces his sense of absolute isolation: "The boys' voices are echoing in the high-rise buildings enveloped in late spring, and I am unable to care about life outside my desires" (39). He avoids social contact, and does not visit the supermarket with his wife and Ying'er. At times, he is not even able to work effectively in housework, which makes his wife stop him from helping her (73). Both the affluence of the society and the abundance of nature envisioned in Tao's story: "Rich rice-fields, picturesque ponds, and mulberry and bamboo groves were everywhere" (180) are scarcely realized in Gu Cheng's "paradise." Somewhere in the novel he is honest about their drudgery:

> It was a dream for all of us when we were looking at the little house in the picture book. I walked so far to find it. It was nearly collapsing, with fleas and rats in it. There was no water, except rain, no electricity and one could only cook one meal there a day. There was never enough firewood. In the first year, Lei and I lived on wild plants and shellfish to survive, in fact, like peasants in China. (188)

Even the new house he built at Rocky Bay is not better: there are rats on the roof, fleas

under the bed, and the boards of the internal walls revealed wet patches eroded by rain (164).

"The Kingdom of Daughters" 女兒國

Li Xia, when translating *Ying'er*, adds to it the subtitle "The Kingdom of Daughters," as it represents the focal point of Gu Cheng's pursuit of the ideal world and therefore encapsulates the theme of the text. In the novel, Gu Cheng also claims that "I am not in love but rather dreaming of a `Kingdom of Daughters' " (87). He hopes that his lover and his wife would love each other and live together harmoniously, and he states his desire in his letter to Xiaonan: "When girls are together, the atmosphere is touching," "I like to see a good girl together with another good girl. In the past I didn't know why, but I now know that this is the only possibility of realizing my love" (87). His fascination with "maidenhood" is evidenced by his perception of the "girlish" and "innocent" qualities of his lover, Ying'er, one supreme example of which is his first impression of her: "When I first met her, she was in a turquoise blue dress, running in the wind like a little girl" (33), and another, his vision of her as a "little girl with flowers climbing up a lilac tree" (51). According to Marián Gálik, Gu Cheng is convinced about the "purity, beauty and harmony between the minds [hearts, xin 心] and the bodies of young girls" in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, and thinks that they together, even from different times and places, are the "unpolluted flowers of heaven" who visit this dusty earth (288). In fact, images of flowers reverberate throughout the entire novel and are used by the writer to convey a sense of delicacy aligned with "maidenhood," as in a number of opening verses: "You are so fragile/ Like flowers in the deep night/ No tree branches can be seen behind" (13).

For Gu Cheng, Waiheke Island becomes his "Daguanyuan" [Grand View Garden 大觀園]. Gálik explains his adoption of the three species of "femini generis"

invented by Jia Baoyu in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*: "baozhu" [precious pearls 寶珠] - young, talented and beautiful girls regardless of social status; "sizhu" [dead pearls 死珠] - married women and viragos, and lastly, "yu yanjing" [fish eyes 魚眼睛] - old women (282). Thus, "maidenhood" is not the same as "womanhood" (Gu, "Fushide, Hungloumeng, nu'erxing" 187, see also Gálik 282). Though Gu Cheng yearns after female beauty of young girls, for instance, that of the young Maori girl in the photo, he is abhorred with her "weary and voluptuous" appearance, the fact that she has long ago grown up into a "mature woman" (55). His devotion to feminine purity might is corresponded by a devaluation of masculinity and hostility to reproduction, suggested by the near exclusion of his son Pangzi (Little Samuel) from the entire narrative. It is still obvious, however, that his attitude toward Little Samuel is indifferent, if not overtly "hostile." The moment his wife Lei gives birth to his son, he is searching through the advertisements trying to look for what he considers an ideal house in New Zealand so as to realize his future kingdom (209).

Nevertheless, Gu Cheng's concept of "Kingdom of Daughters" in fact also deviates from Cao Xueqin's "Grand View Garden." The essential irony of his kingdom lies in his (mis)understanding of Cao Xueqin's philosophy. It is true that he sides with Cao with regard to the concept of "heaven," seeing it as a "higher nature," a "poetico-metaphysical entity," and "something like the Land of Illusion or the Palace of the White Emperor" as delineated in *Dream of the Red Chamber* (Gálik 283). "Everything is only a shadow-image [yingxiang 影像] of the Land of Illusion," he said, "If there exists life in human society [renjian 人間], this is only meaningful in evoking the memories of life [shengming qiye生命記憶], the purpose of which is for one to escape from the moral principles of human society [renshi lunli 人事倫理], once again to return to the realm of beauty" (Gu, "Fushide, *Hongloumeng*, nu'erxing" 190, see also G álik 283-4). However, the narrator seems to have put aside the idea of "illusion," once

he has his "Grand View Garden" before his eyes. The narration is occupied with all kinds of sexual encounters between himself and Ying'er, at first in the bedroom of the house of the Maori family where Ying'er lives after her arrival (29-32), in the bush (41-42), then in the little hut on the hill side (43), and by the end in the bed of Gu Cheng and Lei when the latter was earning money for both of them (43-44). He glorifies in his sexual power and in Ying'er's inventiveness. In the words of Marian Galik, he has forgotten the "Buddhist-Taoist teaching" of Cao Xueqin that "love and ideal relationships are an illusion" and therefore has not gone beyond "Jia Baoyu's stage of puberty in his emotional and sexual development" (Gálik 288).

What is also clear from the novel is Gu Cheng's obssession with his "grandiose self." He locates himself at the centre of attention and compulsively demands self-confirming responses from Lei and Ying'er. This is revealed particularly by the "triple role" of Lei. Being a young, educated woman, she fulfils her role in the "Grand View Garden." She is also the narrator's mother, the one who takes care of him and to whom he turns to in desperation: "When I suffered an attack, she [Ying'er] would run away, avoiding me. But you [Lei] held my hands saying, `it's all right' " (30). But the most difficult and embarassing of all is probably being his wife. She teaches Ying'er to drive, introduces her islander friends to her, and even helps her to look for a job. As the narrator admits: "You sense what was happening from the very beginning, but remained disturbingly indifferent as if it was someone else's business or another domestic affair" (127). Because of the insult borne by Lei, particularly in her "masochistic" admiration for her husband, she is compared to Echo (94-5), who never becomes a "desiring other," but only remains dependent on, and even subservient to his husband, the Narcissus (96).

If Lei is Echo, then Ying'er is Gu Cheng's reflection. She performs her "mirroring" function by being, in Gu Cheng's imagination, his own "double," the one

on whom he projects his self-love and who confirms his sense of self-worthiness. He emphasizes the harmony of his relationship with Ying'er: "the life we created together, the laughter, the mutual mocking, her sarcasm about me, the chain of witticisms and reparte that formed such harmony and joy, never to be replaced ..." (34), describes their similarities: "We are so much alike," "Her biggest mole was on her hip and exactly the same as mine" (56), and inseparability by alluding to the growth of trees: "We were like trees growing together, tangled up, shaking incessantly in the wind through time." (33) Curiously, the name "Ying'er" [英兒] bears the same pronunciation as "infant" [嬰兒] in Chinese. This might perhaps suggest the narrator's unconscious perception of his lover and therefore himself as babies. He even aligns Lei with Ying'er: "Many of the Islanders could not tell the two apart" (67). To a certain extent, therefore, Lei too becomes Gu Cheng's double: "She [Ying'er] laughed the way you [Lei] did and walked the way you did and lived like you. Sometimes I even think she has become you" (68). As both Ying'er and Lei are shadows of the narrator, they are, after all, "visual images," and in other words, "presence of the absent" (Fayek 310, see also Chen 100).

As a writer, Gu Cheng is aware that his hero "Jia Baoyu likes young girls, but unlike most other men who seek to possess them, he only loves them, works for them, and tries to keep them from being contaminated" (Gu, "Fushide, *Hungloumeng*, nu'erxing" 189). Yet throughout the narrative, it is clear that the narrator Gu Cheng has really exploited his wife, allowing her to work for him. Moreoever, the exploitation is not merely physical and psychological; Simon Patton, in "The Unbearable Heaviness of Being: Gender, Sexuality and Insanity in Gu Cheng and Xie Ye's *Ying'er*" shows how it is also ideological by unveiling the essential contradiction in its picture of femininity. Using Lu Tonglin's *Misogyny, Cultural Nihilism, and Oppositional Politics*, he associates *Ying'er* with those "misogynist narratives," in which the "female body" is "consistently invoked" as a "locus upon which male subjects attest to their potency and

their power" (408). In the novel, the narrator's "masculine self-loathing" seems to go hand in hand with his "insistence on feminine purity"; quoting extensively from the novel (*Ying'er* 42), Patton nevertheless illustrates how G's descriptions of the sexual interaction between himself and Ying'er is still one "enacted by aggressive, dominant male subjects" and "dismembered female bodies" (409).

The question is: Is the narrator ever conscious of the wrongs that he has done to his wife? Though it has been suggested that the novel is meant to be an "apology" by the writer/ narrator to his wife, this claim is harshly disqualified by the critic Xia Lin. First of all, Little Samuel [Mu'er 小木耳] the speaker's son, is the first and foremost character to whom his apologies should have been directed. Gu Cheng's unwillingness to mention Mu'er in his sections thus proves that he still regards his son as his greatest enemy, the intruder upon his ideal world (170). Xia also claims the speaker has in fact never abandoned his wish as the emperor of his own kingdom, and the sincerity of his so-called "apology" is undermined even for the addressee, that is, his wife (170). Xia's remark is even more ominous in another article. By writing the novel, Gu Cheng does not only recall his affair with Ying'er and therefore possesses her once again through his memory, but might also be intimidating his wife from an escape from his "city." (138). Thus *Ying'er* both betrays the speaker/ writer's narcissistic desire for possession and manipulation, and foreshadows his murder of his wife.

Thus, as Mao Shian suggests, the so-called "Kingdom of Daughters" envisaged by the narrator is in fact an independent patriarchy, in which both women, Lei and Ying'er, are made dependant on him both sexually and emotionally (180). As long as both Lei and Ying'er act as the "mirror" to the narrator's "grandiose self," and moreover, remain complicitous to his "Grand View Garden," a state of bliss is achieved in the narrator which is akin to that remembered from the womb and briefly enjoyed during infancy: "I want to see equally beautiful people, all of them pure white and my heart

will be restored to the tranquillity of the early days. It can only be in peace in its own image" (88). In "Massage," the narrator undergoes a physical rejuvenation, which might be extended to that of symbolic as well:

> I walked to the giant mirror, ran my fingers through my hair, surprised. It looked as if I had never been so fair, my skin so soft and relaxed. It wasn't me at all. I pulled my face and there weren't any wrinkles. (123)

As Narcissus wants the pool to remain undisturbed so as to preserve his own reflection, Gu Cheng the speaker desires for the world to stand still so as to sustain his ideal:

> There was only this powerful sweetness, endlessly repeated, spastically throbbing. There was nothing in the dark night. The feeling of sunlight and trees of the day, the distant waves in the ocean, the silver-coloured sails and the purple shadows of the clouds seen from a standing position were all gone. (43-44)

According to Mao Shian, after the writer reduced both women into "slavery," Ying'er succeeded in "escaping" from the patriarchy, while Xie Ye became the victim of "male violence" (180). In the novel, when Ying'er finally leaves the narrator, she does not only strike a fatal blow to his "grandiose self," but also puts an end to his "Grand View Garden." Deprived of his "idealized self-object," he suffers from "narcissistic injury," and feels "incomplete" (105) and fragmented:

> Everything was as usual, but when I woke up, my hands were missing. (15)
>
> Blood is still flowing in my heart, but there is no way for my heart to return to my body. My speech becomes writing. I am a wound all over. I am no longer a whole person. The cut of my wound is as long as my life. When I am dissected, I will no longer be able to keep intact. I can only say: "Let me bleed." (100)

He is stripped of the illusory feeling of wholeness and life he has enjoyed in his "Grand

View Garden," becomes more imprisoned in his narcissistic hell, and envisages himself as living in a glass bottle: "Still, I want to go back into the glass bottle" (93). Gu Cheng's reaction to Ying'er is typical of a narcissus to his/ her idealized "self-object." Previously, he had adored her like a goddess: "I love her as I would worship God" (29). Such idealization quickly steers to devaluation. He now charges her of murder: "You are the one who has caused me to die" (13), becomes convinced of that she had "used" him to stay out of China: "I had never expected her to be so fond of money and vanity (197), and even compares her to a prostitute: "It would be better if she could be a high-class courtesan" (197). In Gálik's words, Ying'er's status is quickly transformed into that of paramour, a kind of femme fatale (285). The letter by Xiangyi, however, provides an alternative perspective to Ying'er's departure, that she might not be "cold" and "malicious" to the narrator, but has only left him because of her disillusionment (196). Whereas Ying'er's motivation remains dubious, it is obvious that Gu Cheng, despite all his grievance, ultimately betrays his overwhelming self-reference in his apparently selfless "love" for Ying'er: the saddest thing for him is not Ying'er's departure, but that she should be stolen by the old man, thus their relation be contaminated: "But there are two things you should not have done. One is that you tainted our relationship by involving someone else so that I cannot even die a clean death" (13).

As the narrator has, apart from his "Kingdom of Daughters," used nature as an idealized self-object and is able to experience a powerful self by regression to this archaic self-object relationship, images of nature mirror the narrator's fullest moment of spiritual and sexual fulfilment. He envisages his sexual awakening as spring: "The entire earth is growing, awakening its desire, so luscious, and so absolute. My desire, like the creeks in the forest, did not stop moving" (41). The omnipotence of nature is, however, never "internalized" into a coherent and firm sense of self. Moreover, his

selfobject relation with "nature" and with "maidenhood" are interlocked. Thus, when Ying'er stops fulfilling her role in his "Kingdom of Daughters," his self-object relationship with nature must also be jeopardised. It follows that nature no longer mirrors the complex totality of the poet's self. His fantasies about Ying'er's return could not amend the situation, and his desperate attempt to reconstruct his self could only produce a fragmented "list," devoid of any organizing principle: "Again, I have the earth and you, the axe, the plane and the fruit trees" (81). An example is "The flowers have all withered. The flowers from the popular trees have all floated past" (82). The image of decay does not merely heighten his sense of loss, but also signifies the break down of the archaic selfobject relationship between him and nature. Such "fragmentation" finds its correspondence in the bore "list" of city life which has abhorred the narrator throughout his life: "These typewriters, manuscripts, computers. A street. What have I to do with it! These jingling gadgets" (82). Ultimately, the narrator, suffering from a disintegration of his self, perceives nature as suffering from a similar disintegration: "I stare at my island blankly as if all the trees on the Island are devoid of leaves, and covered with black powder. It is just like this in my dream..." (102).

The Novel as "Will": Death, Suicide and Destruction

The very striking thing about *Ying'er* is its impending sense of death, suicide and destruction. Bei Ye sees *Ying'er* as a "will," the "last confession" given by the protagonist who tells "his own story of love, hatred, victories and losses" (158). For Marian Galik, the narrator's extremity and death wish is due to his indebtedness to, and misunderstanding of Zhuangzi's philosophy. Based on Zhuangzi's advocation of "making all things equal" or of "equality of things and opinions," Gu puts "life" and

"death," "God" and "Devil" on the same "ethical hierarchy" (291). Thus images of "devil" and "madman" reverberate throughout the narrative, for instance, in the "Prologue": "The dead are beautiful women" (5), and in the "Epilogue": "The devil is very clear" (217). In line with the current argument on narcissism, the novel could perhaps be read as the suicide note of the narrator, who rages under his "narcissistic" injury and whose self-destructive mechanism has been initiated. Therefore, before Gu Cheng narrates backward and tells the story of his past, he has already decided to end his life, and names the beginning chapter "The Will." After the story has come to the end, the last chapter bears the title: "Gone," and ends saying, "I will soon be gone" (215). Still, Chen Bingliang suggests another way in which death and suicide are significant. For the narcissistic character, it makes possible the return to the "inorganic situation" before s/he was born (Fayek 318, see also Chen 116). It is the time when one is still an embryo, and therefore totally reliant on one's mother. This interpretation in turn sheds light on certain statements which are otherwise undecipherable. When Gu Cheng complains of tiredness: "I am so tired and so sleepy" (18), he might betray his longing to retreat into his mother's womb. Elsewhere he interrupts his narrative with the mention of water: "I am thirsty. I want to drink water" (21). For Chen Bingliang, water suggests the "amniotic fluid" in the mother's womb (117).

Narcissism and Reading

The entire *Ying'er* is written in the first person, but with different narrators. The novel begins with a short "Prologue" (5-10), in which an acquaintance of Gu Cheng, whose identity is never exactly stated, tells the disappearance of G (Gu Cheng), and provides the reader all he got to know about G and his wife C (Lei) when they were staying in City B (Berlin). He now visits Waikehe Island and meets C again, who gives

a box of writings by G to the narrator, the contents of which are then revealed in the following section of the novel. The novel's main body is therefore spoken by Gu Cheng, and consists of Part One (11-90) and Part Two (91-215). In the "Epilogue" (217-31), the unnamed, mysterious narrator, assumes his voice again. Having gone through G's writings, this narrator expresses his new feelings toward the poet and describes his own visit to G's house. The last part of the novel is a short section by Lei (253-67), addressed to her son Little Samuel and consists of her memories of him as well as her blessings. The novel ends with Gu Cheng's last poem, "Return Home," also addressed to Little Samuel (Shan) (267-8)[1].

The critic Shi Ming has observed that the beginning of Part One seems to be spoken by a "mad" "spirit" who has not yet recovered from his trauma, and its "disrupted, truncated" sentence structure and organization are characteristic of a prose-poem rather than a novel (151); from the tenth chapter onward, "smoothness" takes over, and the more controlled prose form enables the reader to form deeper and clearer perspectives of the speaker's memories (151); and Part Two further substantiates into even more concrete settings and conversations (152). Thus, G's narration might in fact reflect the mental fluctuations of the writer the time he produced the novel, which stretched from March to July of 1993 (150-2). Such variations in narrative prompt the reader to take on different roles. S/he is first appalled by the inconsistent and even unintelligible narrative at the beginning, thus remains an outsider who judges and "observes" the sickness of G. As the narrative becomes more intelligible, for instance, in the love scenes between Gu Cheng and Ying'er, his attempt and effort to build up a house for his "family," the reader is gradually drawn and immersed into his

1 There are two Mainland versions of *Ying'er*, one published by the Huayi chubanshe in November 1993, the other by the Zuojia chubanshe in the same month. This thesis uses Li Xia's English translation, which is based on the Huayi edition. Apart from layout, design, and minor textual variations, the Zuojia edition does not include Gu Cheng's last poem, and has the main body of the "Epilogue" inserted before "Part Two" (123-35), the remaining part of it placed by the end of the whole novel (312-4).

"confession," and directed to the vicissitudes of his emotions. Yet, even the latter part of the novel is not devoid of disruptions: from time to time indecipherable elements are infused into the narrative. Examples are Gu Cheng's dreams and illusions in the short chapters that begin Part Two, which are mixtures of the "sane" and the "insane," and which allow the reader to balance his roles of both "participant" and "observer."

Lei's narration, addressed to her son Little Samuel, expresses her sorrow over her separation from her parents and from her son (243), her self-reproach on her failure in providing him with his basic needs on the island (237-8), the profound longing and loneliness nagging him and herself (253), and her looking forward to the days when Samuel is allowed to come back to her, and moreover, return to their homeland, China. Even though no reproach is directed against Gu Cheng, the narrative is immensely touching and does shed light, though implicitly, on his despotism. Curiously, the whole book ends with the short poem "Return Home," in which Gu Cheng proclaims his love for his son: "Shan, I love you," and expresses a longing similar to that of his wife, for him: "I want to return home." How, then, is one to interpret such a proclamation of fatherly love and longing? Is it mere hypocrisy, or was it produced out of his self-deception? Or does he have any difficulties that remain unspoken ("I left you/ Because I was frightened of seeing you") ? Both Lei's words and Gu Cheng's last poem help to balance the long narrative given by G, and allow the reader to locate and re-locate their own judgement.

However, the most intriguing thing of the novel seems to lie in the "Prologue" and the "Epilogue" that envelope G's narration. In the "Prologue," the narrator "observes" Gu Cheng from the viewpoint of an acquaintance, describes his "hobbies" and education, and mildly criticizes his bigamy (5, 7). Throughout the entire prologue, this anonymous narrator is at pains to maintain an objective stance, and most of his comments on G are made with reference to what others said about him:

> Later, his (G's) behaviour became more and more bizarre. If he could not be held responsible for his earlier experiences, history and his time, then he was certainly to blame for his later life. This is the view widely held by critics.(5-6)
>
> The most mystifying thing to his friends about his B City behaviour was his talk about the Island. (6)

In the "Epilogue," the narrator, like the readers, is supposed to have gone through G's writings. On the one hand, he reminiscences on G's "perfectly normal" character and even his outstanding ability in poetry and Eastern philosophies; on the other hand, he condemns him as a "well-disguised lunatic" and a "devil," who understands his "wild absurdities" and uses his "rationality" to serve his madness step by step (217). The greatest irony, however, is that the narrator begins to realize that his own heart has somehow got infected, and is filled with devilish feelings (217); moreover, he begins to speculate on the possible evils in each human being: "If our whole life was turned over for examination, how would it look?" As he is on his way to G's household, he continues to be obsessed with the line: "Come this way and we will get home" (221). It sounds like the call of the "devil" or the "madman," and carries an implication that "we" - both G and the narrator, are in fact arriving at the "kingdom" that they have yearned for in their whole lives. As he travels around the site on which G has lived with the two women, not only does he start to visualize, on the basis of what he read, their lives on the island:

> "I was walking on the path up the hill. In these places where I had never been but which seemed familiar, G's voice can be heard everywhere. Maybe he has never really left here. I felt I had seen the first candle that he lit on the Island, seen the dream that he had been obsessed with since he was twelve and his stubborn, rock-like arbitrary demands. (224)

Numerous fragments of conversation that appeared in G's writings also start to invade

and echo in his brain, and gives his visit a touch of "vicariousness," until he finds himself at the point of collapse:

> I came to this island for no apparent reason. I suddenly found myself standing here, without a purpose, involved in a fateful struggle. ...
>
> I began to breathe unevenly. (228)

And it is when he is leaving the island that he seems to "wake up gradually from a dream, becoming clear-headed" (229). The reader, following the narrator's mind, therefore have their empathy continuously worked upon until it is exhausted. The intriguing relationship between the Narcissus of the novel and the reader, who might not be less "narcissistic" is, perhaps, best expressed by Marián Gálik in his conclusion to his Postscript of the novel:

> *Ying'er* is also a mirror of part of the general mind, i.e., the minds of our contemporaries in China and elsewhere who are reading works of this kind and are under pressure to ask themselves: What kind of species we human beings really are? ... All of us have a smaller or greater part of guilt in relation to Gu Cheng's fate. This includes his maternal grandmother who committed suicide, his parents, Xie Ye, his lover, and finally his friends and enemies in China and abroad including myself (297-8).

CHAPTER FIVE

NARCISSISM, CULTURE AND SELF

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at him," Jesus addressed to a group of Pharisees and scribes in the Temple of Jerusalem about a person who has committed a crime against the law of Moses (St. John 8:7). Narcissism, like "sin," is a universal human experience. Narcissuses, like "sinners," are not merely among those locked up in the mental asylum. Nor are they restricted to those who pay regular visits to the psychiatrist. Narcissistic sentiments may be present in each of us, though in varying degrees. Accordingly, the motif of narcissism has been dramatized by writers of different periods and cultural origins, whether it is the Victorian England, as in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; the post-war Japan, in Mishima's *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*; or the post-Mao China, like Gu Cheng's *Ying'er*. Not only do all these works depict impressive narcissistic characters, they all initiate, though in different ways, the process of "empathic reading." As a result, the text is transformed into a mirror, in which we see our own reflections, or at least, resemblances of us. Ensnared with the attractiveness of narcissism, we are but shocked with its danger; convinced of the prevalence of the narcissistic experience, we are yet reminded of its very perverted nature.

The prevalence of narcissism, or any mental disorders or phenomena, also reflect more generally the cultural configurations of the people and their sense of

prevalence of narcissism in China and Japan, in particular, carries strong implications of the cultural changes in the two countries in the twentieth century, and the global transformation of the oriental "self," hitherto "selfless," "collectivist" and "relational," toward greater "individualism."

The Western "Self"

The experience of individualism is acknowledged to be more prominent in western cultures than in oriental ones. Theologically, an inflated concern with the self has been regarded as a consequence of the personal anxiety connected to the cultural belief in ontological separation and estrangement from a Judeo-Christian God (Nelson B., "Self-images and Systems of Spiritual Direction in the History of European Civilization" 1965, see Johnson 119). The political accentuation of individual freedom and rights within some western communities further becomes a license for personal fulfilment. On the positive side, individualism does not only acknowledge individual and unique existence, but also calls for self-expression and self-actualization; on the negative side, however, it also leads to the experience of isolation and frustration, and the personal sense of heightened responsibility also means an "inflated propensity for guilt, self-recrimination" (Johnson 120), and self-doubt," and worse still, invites a defensive, narcissistic self-infatuation.

Francis L.K.Hsu, in "The Self in Cross-cultural Perspective," lends further insight to the western self by coining the term "psychosocial homeostasis" (PSH), that is, the process by which a "satisfactory level of psychic and interpersonal equilibrium" is achieved (33-4). In Western culture, a person's self-esteem depends on how well he/ she can stand up on his/ her own feet (36). Though westerners begin their lives with parents and siblings, from whom they derive a sense of intimacy and security, as they grow up their relationship with their families very often become voluntary, especially after they

reach maturity and get married. Consequently, they have to go out and search for alternative people or means in order to compensate for the intimacy and to work out their "psychosocial homeostasis" (33-4). They may go outside and search for personal fulfilment by expanding their human relationships through the cultivation of friendship, and through the mastery of alien peoples and other worlds (38). However, in most cases they receive only the "illusion of intimacy" through "intense but fleeting interactions with masses of other human beings" (39). Alternatively, they may turn inward and resort to their inner selves for definition and guidance, with "accent on the exploration of their own inner worlds," "anxieties," and "unconsciousness" (38). These find expression in the western way of religion, in which the individual's conscience may be his/ her sole guide to an absolute "God" (38). In this opposite direction, however, their need for intimacy or for something tangible with which they can maintain an effective relationship remain unsatisfied (39). Therefore, westerners tend to direct themselves to a third route, that is, the control of the physical universe which expresses itself in many ways: business empires, exploration of hidden places and tribes, collections of antiques, stamps, or match covers, and the keeping of pets are but a few of the myriad outlets for the westerners' desire for control (39-40). Nevertheless, regardless of which route they take, their psychosocial homeostasis remains more precarious than Chinese and Japanese.

The Japanese "Self"

In contrast, "individualism" is seldom applied to the people of Japan. Hsu, in accounting for the "psychosocial homeostasis" of the Japanese, differentiates between inheriting and non-inheriting sons. Whereas the former are tied to their families, the source of their self-esteem, throughout their lives, the latter find their human network either in rural farm areas where they become heads of "bunke" (branch household) to some "honke" (chief household) in a sort of "dozoku" (consisting of a honke and one or more bunke in a superior-subordinate relationship) arrangement, or in an urban or trade

situation, where they become clients or disciples in some "iemoto" (a "dozoku" arrangement not based on land) (41). Whereas the former have a strong kinship base, the latter also have an adequate foundation for forming large groupings, and both are less subject to the kind of precarious and highly competitive human relationships characteristic of the westerners (42).

George DeVos, in "Dimensions of the Self in Japanese Culture," gives more credit to the collectivist orientation of the Japanese culture. In DeVos's view, Japanese socialization tends to legitimize authority but de-emphasize autonomy. The indigenous Japanese concepts of learning have emphasized the need for exemplary behaviour on the part of mentors. The child is expected to learn from the behaviour of others, especially of parents and teachers (148). In social interaction, the emphasis falls on cooperative behaviour and the necessary social subordination, at least on the surface, into a harmonious mode of instrumental realization with others within one's own group, very often under the "iemoto." (161-7, 178). Thus ritualized activities, like singing company songs and chanting slogans, are common in Japanese companies, which serve to internalize the sense of duty and obligation as well as to reinforce a positive experience of collectivity (179). Therefore, people find ultimate satisfaction in "belonging," which could shift from the family as an enduring corporate entity to which they have quasi-religious reverence, to the establishment of groups or occupational relationships through which they can realize what the Japanese call "shiawase," that is, comfort, contentment, and happiness defined in very material terms. Though there are individual heroes in Japanese history and fantasy, as witnessed by the popularity of lone heroes in the samurai epics, the sense of pathos suffered by the individual outweighs that of any potential triumph (180).

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to consider Japanese as having no sense of "individuality." Even though their traditional Buddhist and Confucianist texts frequently adopted an explicit bias against the self, visual and performing arts, including that found

in Buddhist and Confucianist work, does reveal a high degree of self-consciousness and self-reflectiveness and an enjoyment of individual difference (Miller 155-6), and the more didactic texts often betray a keen awareness of the conflicts between the society and the individuals, and the moral dilemmas of the latter (Miller 154). Nor are the Japanese free from the problem of identity. Some writers, such as Mishima and Danae, have been able to convey in their thinly disguised autobiographical experiences this difference between "tatemae" - the outward presentation of the social self - and the painfully hidden "honne" of inclinations and proclivities (DeVos 180). In fact, the loss of the emperor as a divine symbol and unifying force in the post-war Japan, which has already been discussed, is merely one of the countless alterations which have transformed the Japanese psychic identity in the twentieth century. What followed were the American occupation and the host of westernizing changes. In addition, the rise of Japan as a leading industrial and commercial power has made it suffer, like other industrial giants, all the identity-shaking features of prosperity, complexity and "bigness," such as the threat of alienation, "dehumanization" and "thingification" (Kimball 13-4). In a country profoundly influenced by the doctrine of "non-recognition of the ego," whose citizens are inclined to identify with or even "dissolve" into the group (Kimball 9), the crisis of, and the subsequent quest for identity is particularly striking and urgent. In 1968 and 1969, these crises and quests for identity took the form of demonstrations and protests on the university campuses throughout Japan; at the same time, these conflicts have also turned inward, and are manifested in various psychological problems and psychiatric symptoms among the Japanese population.

The Chinese "Self"

Chinese, just like the Japanese, are seldom regarded by psychologists or portrayed by writers as paying much concern to the self. In the words of Hsu, their self-esteem is tied to their parents, siblings, and other close relatives, can maintain their

psychosocial homeostasis by adherence to the kinship network without resorting to other elements such as gods or things in the case of the westerners (35), or "iemoto" in the case of the Japanese. Godwin Chu, in "The Changing Concept of Self in Contemporary China," further suggests that the traditional Chinese self prior to the communist revolution of 1949 was distinguished by a "continuity" with two characteristics. First, it is oriented toward the "significant others," such as family members, rather than toward the self (258). Thus, the old saying runs: "One's body, hair, and skin are gifts from one's parents. One is not at liberty to do harm to them" [身體髮膚，受諸父母]. A male Chinese would consider himself a son, a brother, a husband, a father, but hardly "himself." Before marriage, a woman should follow her father. After marriage, she should follow her husband. After the death of her husband, she should follow her son. Outside the relational context of the significant others, there would be very little independent self left for the Chinese (258). Second, these "self-other relations" were primarily built on traditional cultural ideas, rather than by materials (258). Thus the collectivity of kinship networks were supported by ideas such as loyalty, filial piety, chastity, integrity, dignity, endurance, and courage (258-260).

However, the "thread of continuity" among the Chinese has been disrupted most severely in the last thirty years, especially during the Cultural Revolution, as a result of changes in social and economic structures - the dispersion of kinship networks, the dwindling influence of the family, radical changes in the occupational structure, rising aspirations in a context of limited resources (267-268), and above all, the apparent seriousness and "simulation" toward the ideology of the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent disappointment when the campaign was over (269-270). What emerges is a new Chinese self that is not as strongly anchored on enduring family relations and traditional values, but is more assertive, less accommodating and submissive to authority figures than in the past, and moreover, leans more toward relations built on what appears to be a utilitarian and material basis. While the new self can now interact with the social

and physical environments with a greater degree of freedom to pursue both individual and collective ends, it is has also lost some of the security that comes with strong family ties and submission to authority, and is therefore less secure than its traditional predecessor.

Cultural Variations: Implications for Narcissistic Manifestations

While the individualistic orientation of Western cultures and their researches on psychology have made narcissism a predominately Western phenomenon, the transformation of the Japanese and Chinese selves in recent decades might have, in one way or another, increased the cases of narcissism in oriental culture. Nevertheless, even though the polarities of East and West have long begun to converge and will continue to do so, the labels "collectivism" and "individualism" still retain their validity. Moreover, each of the three cultures still preserves its own uniqueness, with its people retaining a concept of the "self" peculiar to them. Accordingly, different cultural orientations are corresponded by different forms of narcissism and manifestations of narcissistic symptoms.

In Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry and Dorian Gray are very much "prototypes" of the western man. Little is said about Lord Henry or Basil Hallward's family, and when Lord Henry does mention his family members, he does not hesitate in displaying his contempt toward them: "I don't care for brothers," he tells Basil Hallward, "My elder brother won't die, and my younger brothers never seem to do anything else" (8). When Basil expresses indignation over the remark, Lord Henry says he was not quite serious: "But I can't help detesting my relations. I suppose it comes from the fact that none of us can stand other people having the same faults as ourselves" (8-9). As discussed already, Lord Henry sets "self-development" as the single goal of

one's life. In fact, as Francis L.K. Hsu describes the way westerners resort to their inner selves for definition and guidance and express their anxieties in the western way of religion, Lord Henry's "New Hedonism" is not unlike his personal cult and his famous dictims the religious commandments. As Hsu describes the westerners' attempt for personal fulfilment by cultivating friendship, and sometimes, by mastering alien people, Lord Henry's manipulation of Dorian Gray, in whom he instils his "personal religion," could not be more obvious. Like Lord Henry, Dorian Gray does not get married and maintain a family. The treasures he collects at his house (Chapter XI) were not only "means of forgetfulness" by which he escape from the fear of his own degradation (142), a method of procuring sensations, but also what Francis L. K. Hsu observes as the most common route engaged by westerners in attempt to control the physical universe.

It is evident that Mizoguchi in Mishima's novel does desire power and grandiosity; but unlike Lord Henry and Dorian Gray, he is far too much obsessed with his social role both as a classmate and as a disciple, his interpersonal relationship with his fellows, his routine life at the Golden Temple and his jealousy of, and contempt for his superior at the temple whose behaviour he is supposed to imitate. In fact, the abundant references to Zen Buddhism, the temple, as well as the intriguing relationship of Mizoguchi with his superior have led many critics to concentrate on the novel's cultural heritage and religious significance, while ignoring its complex psychological dimension - the fact that the protagonist does have a "self" and his mental problems so peculiar to the post-war Japan.

Similarly, even though Gu Cheng, as an "obscure poet," places undue emphasis on "individuality" and "self" and expresses his anti-social sentiments throughout his novel, he appears to be one of those traditional Chinese enmeshed in what Francis L. K. Hsu calls the "relational context of significant others" (258). When, on the title page of the novel, he claims his love for both Lei and Ying'er: "You are both my wives; I have loved you both and I still do," he does not only assert his prime concern with his family

but also his role as husband. Accordingly, his self-destruction, though could be seen as the result of his "narcissistic injury," appears to be merely caused by the pathos and hopelessness of a husband and lover.

It is therefore obvious that both Mishima and Gu Cheng offer vivid and down-to-earth portraits of their own cultures. However, it must not lead to the conclusion that their characters are "less narcissistic" than those depicted by Oscar Wilde. From my observation, it is merely that both Mizoguchi and Gu Cheng in *Ying'er* have not escaped entirely from their societies which have their basis upon strong human networks like family and religious communities, and traditional values such as duty and chastity, the reverberations of which might have, at certain points of the novels, masked their strong narcissistic impulses.

The forms of narcissism in *The Temple of the Golden Temple* and *Ying'er* are very different from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* yet in another aspect. While Lord Henry and Dorian Gray seek public attention and enrich their lives with exquisite sensations, the main narcissistic symptom of Mizoguchi's has been the merger with the Golden Temple, which is all at once the emblem of Japan, its beauty and its traditional religion. Gu Cheng's idealized self-objects, "nature" and "maidenhood," which owe greatly to Tao Yuanming's [陶淵明] "Taohuayuan" [桃花源] and Cao Xueqin's [曹雪芹] *Hungloumeng* [紅樓夢] respectively, are in the spotlight throughout the entire *Ying'er*. The two do not only guide us toward the writer's sources of inspiration, but perhaps also suggest his secret admiration for Tao Yuanming and Jia Baoyu [賈寶玉] the former being a great poet of the Eastern Jin Dynasty well-known for his uprighteousness, the latter being one of the most popular and charming characters in what is regarded as the masterpiece of Chinese Literature. How then could one account for the different forms of narcissism found in English versus Japanese and Chinese cultures? The essay "Sexual Differences in Narcissistic Styles," written by Judith A. Richman and Joseph A. Flaherty, might offer us some insights.

Richman and Flaherty suggest that in childhood socialization, different parent-daughter and parent-son relationships produce female personalities embodying stronger needs for interpersonal attachments and empathic relatedness, in contrast to male personalities characterized by stronger needs for autonomy and differentiation from others (75). Philipson accordingly explains how traditional family structures give rise to sex-differentiated expressions of narcissistic psychopathology. Following Kohut, she sees narcissism as deriving largely from inadequate empathic responses by the mother in relation to the child's developing sense of the self, but regards faulty maternal empathy as taking different forms in relation to sons versus daughters. Unempathic mothers are more likely to treat daughters as "extensions" of themselves, and produces female narcissistic issues that involves the quest for self-esteem through fusion and merger with omnipotent others; however, they tend to treat sons as "other objects," thus producing male narcissism that involves a defensive separateness from the mother, grandiosity, extreme self-centreness, and the need for admiration (Richman and Flaherty 76). In fact, many of Lasch's examples suggest that men and women express narcissism in different ways.

Coincidentally, all characters explored in this thesis are males. However, childhood socialization, which is regarded by critics as a crucial factor to sex-differentiated expressions of narcissism, might also have led to "cultural-differentiated" expressions of narcissism on a cultural basis. As male children are more likely to be treated as "other objects," children in Western families are trained to become independent; in extreme cases, they defend themselves against their environment and assert their separateness like Dorian Gray and Lord Henry. Similarly, as female children are more often treated as "extensions," children in oriental families, even if they are reluctant to imitate and conform, are nevertheless trained to be more reliant than their western counterparts; in severe cases, they become like Mizoguchi and Gu Cheng, and

could not survive without their self-objects. In particular, the implementation of the single child policy in urban China from the eighties, the purpose of which has been to slow down popular growth, has had the adverse effect of producing parents who are indulgent and over-protective and children who are both selfish and dependent, if not narcissistic.

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